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JOURNEYS WITH DUMAS

THE SPERONARA



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JOURNEYS WITH DUMAS

THE SPERONARA

FROM THE FRENCH OF

ALEXANDRE DUMAS

The Ruins of the Greek Theatre, Taormina

Mount Ætna in the Distance

KATHARINE PRESCOTT WORMELEY



BOSTON

LITTLE, BROWN, AND COMPANY

1902

The ruins of the Greek Theatre, Taormina
about 1870 in the distance

JOURNEYS WITH DUMAS

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THE SPERONARA

FROM THE FRENCH OF

ALEXANDRE DUMAS

BY

KATHARINE PRESCOTT WORMELEY



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1902



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JOURNEYS WITH DUMAS

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

DUMAS' own "Explanation" of his "Impressions de voyage" is as follows:

"I know not, dear readers, if you will remember that one day — it will soon be twenty-four years ago — I said, 'I will make the tour of the Mediterranean; I will accomplish its periplus; I will write the history of the ancient world, which is nothing else than the history of civilization.'

"People laughed; they made great fun of me; a man whom I had enabled to win a million, avenged himself by saying a witty thing.

"'Do you know,' he said, 'that Dumas has discovered the Mediterranean!'

"This journey, or rather this series of journeys that I planned was difficult to accomplish without the aid of the government and with the limited resources of a man of letters; but after all, God helping me, it did not seem impossible.

"I started in 1834. On this first journey I saw the whole of the South of France, from Cette to Toulon: Aigues-Mortes, Arles, Tarascon, Beaucaire, Nîmes, Marseille, Avignon, Vaucluse.

"That was a beginning.

"I started again the following year; this time my journey lasted two years. I saw Hyères, Cannes, the gulf of Fréjus, Grasse, Draguignan, Nice, the Corniche, Genoa, Florence, Pisa, Livorno, Turin, Milan, Pistoia, Perugia, Rome, Naples, Messina, Palermo, Girgenti, Marsala, Syracuse, Catania; I climbed Ætna and the Stromboli; I visited the Lipari islands; I pushed on as far as Lampedusa; I returned to Reggio; I went up Calabria, afoot, to Pæstum. I was arrested once at Naples by his Majesty King Ferdinand; I was about to return by way of Venice, when I was arrested a second time, at Foligno, by his Holiness Gregory XVI., brought back by the carabinieri to Thrasymane, and left on the shore of the lake with injunction to return to France as fast as possible.

"I returned to France.

"In 1842, still firm in my determination, I took a boat in the port of Livorno, and with that boat, which ought to have foundered a dozen times and never foundered at all, I visited the island of Elba, Pianosa, Gorgone, Monte-Cristo, and Corsica.

"In 1846 I started for Madrid. I visited Barcelona, Malaga, Granada, Cordova, Seville, Cadiz. I straddled the straits; I went to Tangier, from Tangier to Tetuan, from Tetuan to Gibraltar, from Gibraltar to Melilla, Djemma-Ghazaouat, Oran, and Algiers.

"At Algiers I made a pause; I wanted to see, in the interior, Blidah, the pass of Mouzaïa, and Milianah.

"Then I started again, and stopped successively at

Djidjelli, Golio, Stora, and Philippeville; I went to Constantine, I returned to Stora; I embarked for Tunis and the Kerkennah islands; I visited the Roman amphitheatre of Djemdjem.

"During my first journey, in France, I spent six thousand francs; during my second journey, in Italy, eighteen thousand; during my third journey, four thousand; and finally, during the last journey, thirty-three thousand, from which must be deducted ten thousand allowed me by the minister of Public Instruction. Total: fifty-one thousand francs.

"But half my project was accomplished; and what matters the cost of accomplishment?

"The works which resulted from these different journeys were the 'Impressions de Voyage,' — in the South of France, — a Year in Florence, — the Villa Palmieri — the Speronara, — The Isles of Æolus, — the Corricolo, — from Paris to Cadiz, — the Véloce.

"Well, now, there still remains to achieve the whole of what I undertook; I must see Venice, Illyria, the Ionian islands, Greece, Constantinople, the shores of Asia Minor, Syria, Palestine, Egypt, the Cyrenian coast, Tripoli.

"And first, I begin, before going farther, with thanks to MM. the managers of the imperial Messageries [public conveyances], who, as soon as they knew my project, offered me gracefully and without remuneration, a passage on their boats for myself and my secretary.

"That was much, but it was not all that I desired.

"To travel by the boats of the Messageries means

touching at Malta, Syra, Alexandria, Beyrout, Smyrna, and Constantinople; seeing what everybody sees; telling it better or less well than others, but at any rate telling it after others. Now the journey that I want to make, I myself, is a journey such as no one has made before me.

“I must make it with a boat of my own; a boat that can stand the sea without much danger and yet not draw more than five feet of water, in order that it may enter all the ports of the Greek archipelago and run close in to all the creeks on the coast of Asia. This boat I shall have some day; and before long, I hope.

“Meantime I have accepted the invitation of a friend to go to St. Petersburg and be the best man at the wedding of his sister-in-law, and, at the same time, to be present at this coming grand operation of freeing forty-five millions of serfs.

“I do not expect to stay long in St. Petersburg. After marrying my friend's sister, seeing the city, and crossing the Neva on one of those beautiful translucent nights when we can read the writing of the woman we love, however fine it be, I shall start for Moscow—the sacred city, still full of the memory of our disaster, grand as a victory. There, I shall mount the citadel of the tzars to see not only the cupolas, gilded or painted green, of its palaces, the steeples of its churches, its sections called the earth-city, the white-city, the Chinese-city, not only the Kremlin, the tower of Ivan the Great (the tallest in the city, formerly inclosing a bell that weighed three hundred and thirty thousand pounds) its angular

palaces, the arsenal, the theatre, the cathedral; not these things only, but the traces of that terrible fire which consumed a city of three hundred and fifty thousand inhabitants, and froze an army of five hundred thousand men. I shall follow down the course of the river and find on the plain of the Moscova the remains of the great redoubt where fell Caulaincourt and where Ney received the title of prince.

"Then I shall return to Moscow to visit its bazaars (where already we find the Orient) its Krasnoï square, its gate of Saint-Vladimir; and there I will relate the marvellous legends of Mentchikof, the seller of little patties, and of Catherine, the Lithuanian servant-girl.

"After that I shall start for Novgorod the little, Nigi-Novgorod, for that will be the period of the splendid fair which attracts the merchants of Persia, India, and China; where I shall find the weapons of the Caucasus, the silver-ware of Toulâ, the coats-of-mail of Tiflis; where malachite and lapis-lazuli are sold in blocks; where turquoises are measured by the bushel; where we may buy in bales the stuffs of Smyrna and Ispahan; and where is brought that famous tea of the Caravan, for which Russia pays its weight in silver, and France and England its weight in gold.

"Curiosity quenched, I shall embark upon the Volga, that king of the rivers of Europe, as the Amazon is queen of the rivers of America, which falls after a course of eighteen hundred miles, through seventy mouths, into the Cuspidian sea. On its way I shall find Astrakhan, with its three bazaars, for Russians,

Hindoos, and Asiatics — Astrakhan, which touches with its right hand the Cossacks of the Don, and with its left hand the Cossacks of the Oural, and, turning its head, sees, till sight is lost, the vast steppes of the Kirghis Tartars, their billows of verdure heaving with the same regular motion as the waves of the Caspian sea.

“ Here I must pause a few days to see once more those men of the long beard, the pointed cap, the wide red breeches, whose lance, bow, and quiver were the terror of my childhood. Then, after hunting bustards on their little horses, and visiting the fisheries that supply those sturgeons one of which will feed a village, and those sterlets the price of one of which will make the fortune of a family, I take a steamboat to Karaïa, where a tarantasse is waiting to take me on to Tiflis.

“ I breathe for an instant in that ‘ hot town,’ so-called from its sulphur baths. There I shall sit at the window of the charming Princess Marie Galitzin and watch India entering Europe and Europe going to India. This is their passage-way, the capital of Georgia, the palace of the kings of Karihti. I am now at the foot of the Caucasus, and about to pass before the rock to which Prometheus was nailed, on my way to visit the camp of Schamyl, that other Titan who, just as Job the excommunicated struggled in his village against the Emperors of Germany, is struggling on his mountain against the Tzars of Russia.

“ Will Schamyl know my name, and will he permit me to sleep a night in his tent ?

“Why not? The bandits of the Sierra knew it well and allowed me to sleep three nights in their huts.

“That visit paid, I shall descend to the plains of Stavropol; leaving on the right the Kalmuck Tartars, on the left the Cossacks of the Black Sea. Reaching the sea of Azof I take a boat and visit Taganrog, where Alexander died of regret — perhaps of remorse — and Kertch, where Mithridates, pursued by the Romans, killed himself; thence a steamboat will take me in two days to Sevastopol, next to Odessa, and land me finally at Galatz, where I shall see if Semlin and Belgrade are still at war, and so pass on to Vienna; at Vienna I shall visit Schoenbrün, the palace-tomb; Wagram, the plain of terrible memories; and the island Lobau, where Napoleon received from the river which he meant, like Xerxes, to chain, the first warning of fate.

“Vienna is Paris; three days, and I shall be among you again, saying to you, dear readers: ‘I have done nine thousand miles in six months; do you recognize me? Here I am!’”

When these words were written there was no “travelling public,” and even the reading public knew comparatively little of countries that were foreign to their own. All is changed since then. The pages of Murray, Baedeker, and the German guide-books teem with the lore, historical and legendary, that Dumas gathered, and which is too well known to myriads of travellers to be other than dull reading now. But the narrative, the tales, the anecdotes remain as perennially fresh as the best novels of the de-

lightful old writer. Those are the parts translated here.

Passing his year of travel in the South of France — a region sacred now to the immortal Tartarin and his progenitor, sons of its soil, and to the manner born — we take him first in his Speronara and his Corricolo, and then — well, then as circumstances, interest, circulation, and courage may provide.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
I. THE SANTA-MARIA DI PIE DI GROTTA . .	1
II. CAPRI. LA BURRASCA	26
III. MESSINA IL NOBILE. TAORMINA LA BELLA .	56
IV. CATANIA. SAN NICOLÀ IL VECCHIO . . .	83
V. ÆTNA	118
VI. SIRACUSA	147
VII. DEATH IN LIFE. A LIVING TOMB . . .	176
VIII. A SHARK. PANTELLARIA	248
IX. GIRGENTI THE MAGNIFICENT	278
X. COLONEL SANTA-CROCE	308
XI. THE INTERIOR OF SICILY	329
XII. PALERMO FELICE. SEGESTA	349

JOURNEYS WITH DUMAS

THE SPERONARA

I

THE SANTA-MARIA DI PIE DI GROTTA

WE started from Paris on the 15th of October, 1834, intending to visit the South of France, Corsica, Italy, Calabria, and Sicily.

The journey we were undertaking was neither a trip of people of fashion nor an expedition of learned men, but a pilgrimage of artists. We intended to neither rush along the main roads in a post-chaise nor bury ourselves in libraries, but to go wherever a picturesque view, an historical memory, or a popular tradition might call us. Consequently, we started forth without a fixed itinerary, leaving to chance and our good luck the care of leading us whithersoever there was something to gain; little concerned for the harvests already reaped by our predecessors; certain that men can never gather into their granaries all the blades that God has sown, and convinced that there is never a land so well raked that no last sheaf is left for history, poesy, or imagination to glean.

The convoy was composed of Geoffroy Jadin, whom the last two Exhibitions had placed in the

front rank of our landscape painters ; Amaury Duval, who was to join us later in Florence, where he was completing, by the study of the great masters, his Raffaellesque education begun in the studios of M. Ingres ; myself, who directed the expedition ; and Milord, who followed it.

As the first three personages whom I have just named are already more or less known to the public by their works, I shall not discourse upon their qualities, physical or moral ; but I ask permission to dwell upon the last of the four, who will play, in the course of this narrative, too important a part to let me neglect to make him known at the outset to my readers, to whom I suspect him of being totally unknown.

Milord was born in London, in 1828, in the kennel of the house of Lord Arthur G . . . , which stands in Regent Street. His father was a terrier, and his mother a bull-dog ; both of pure and ancient ancestry ; so that their son united in his person all the characteristic qualities of the two races : that is to say, physically, a head as big in itself as the rest of his body, adorned with two large eyes that grew bloody at the slightest emotion, also a nose half split, revealing part of the upper teeth of jaws that opened from ear to ear and closed like a vise ; and morally, with an ardour for combat which, when excited, spent itself indifferently on every species of animal or thing, from a rat to a bull, from the fuse of a sky-rocket exploding in fireworks to the lava that gushed from a volcano.

We started from Paris, as I have said, with the

intention of roaming over the South of France, Italy, Sicily, and Calabria, and part of this scheme had already been accomplished when, after a stay of three weeks in Rome, I had the honour to meet at the house of the Marquis de T . . . , French *chargé d'affaires*, the Comte de Ludorf, our ambassador to Naples. As I was about to start in a few days for that city, the Marquis de T . . . thought it desirable to introduce me to his honourable associate, in order to facilitate the diplomatic methods which were to open to me the barriers to Terracina. M. de Ludorf received me with the cold and vacant smile that promises nothing, though it did not deter me, two days later, from taking to him our passports myself for his official *visa*. M. de Ludorf had the goodness to tell me to deposit our passports in his office and to return in two days to obtain them. As we were not in any degree hurried, I took leave of M. de Ludorf, inwardly resolving not to allow myself to be presented to any ambassador without previously obtaining the most circumstantial information as to him and his manners.

Two days later I presented myself at the passport office, where an employé, with the best civility in the world, informed me that difficulties had arisen concerning my *visa*, and that it would be well if I saw the ambassador myself. Thus I was obliged, in spite of my resolution, to call again upon M. de Ludorf. I found him colder and stiffer than before ; but as I thought it would probably be the last time I should ever have the honour of seeing him, I was patient. He made me a sign to sit down ; I took a

chair. That was better than the first time, when he left me standing.

"Monsieur," he said with a certain embarrassment, fingering the pleats of his shirt-frill, "I regret to tell you that you cannot go to Naples."

"Why not?" I asked, quite determined to give our dialogue the tone I chose; "is it because the roads are bad?"

"No, monsieur, the roads, on the contrary, are superb; but you have the misfortune to be upon the list of those who cannot enter the Neapolitan kingdom."

"However honourable that distinction may be, your Excellency," I replied, suiting the tone to the words, "as it will break up one half of my proposed journey, you will, I hope, permit me to insist on knowing the cause of this prohibition. If it is one of those slight causes one meets everywhere in Italy, I have friends in social life who have power, I think, to remove it."

"The causes are very serious, monsieur; and I doubt if your friends, however high their position may be, have enough influence to remove them."

"But surely without indiscretion, monsieur, I may be allowed to know them."

"Oh! mon Dieu, yes," replied M. de Ludorf, carelessly, "I see no objection to telling you. In the first place, you are the son of General Mathieu Dumas, who was minister of war in Naples, during the usurpation of Joseph Bonaparte."

"I am sorry, your Excellency, to refuse relationship with the illustrious general you name; but you

are mistaken ; there is not even a family connection between us. My father is General Alexandre Dumas."

"General Alexandre Dumas?" said M. de Ludorf, as if he were searching his mind as to where he could have heard that name.

"Yes," I continued, "the man who after he was made prisoner at Tarento, in defiance of the laws of hospitality, was poisoned at Brindisi with Mauscourt and Dolomieu in defiance of the law of nations. This happened at the time they were hanging Caracciolo in the Bay of Naples. You see I do all I can, monsieur, I help your memory."

M. de Ludorf pursed his lips.

"Well! monsieur," he said, after a moment's silence, "there is a second reason—your political opinions. You are designated to us a republican, and you have left Paris, we are told, on political business."

"As to that, I reply, monsieur, by showing you my letters of introduction ; nearly all bear the seals of our ministries and the signatures of our ministers. See, here is one from Admiral Jacob, and one from Maréchal Soult, and this is from the minister of Public Instruction, M. Villemain ; they all request for me the help and protection of French ambassadors in just such circumstances as those I am now in."

"Well!" replied M. de Ludorf, "as you have foreseen and provided for the position in which you are, you must face it, monsieur, by the means in your power. As for me, I declare that I shall not

visé your passport. Here are those of your companions, which are duly signed, for I see no impropriety in their going where they choose; but I am forced to say again, they will go without you."

"Has your Excellency any commissions for Naples?" I said, rising.

"Why do you ask, monsieur?"

"Because I will execute them with great pleasure."

"But I have told you that you cannot go there."

"I shall be there within three days."

I bowed to M. de Ludorf and went out leaving him stupefied by my assurance.

There was no time to lose if I meant to do as I said; I rushed to an old friend of mine, a pupil in the *École de Rome*, whom I had known in the studio of M. Lethierre.

"My dear Guichard, you must do me a service."

"What is it?"

"Go, immediately, and ask M. Ingres for permission to travel in Sicily and Calabria."

"But, my very dear fellow, I am not going to travel there."

"No, but I am, and as they wont let me go with my name, I must go with yours."

"Oh! that's another thing. I understand."

"Armed with M. Ingres' permission, you must go and get a passport from our *chargé d'affaires*. Follow the sequence. With that passport, go to the ambassador to Naples and have it *visé*; then with that *visé* I start for Naples."

"Famous! When do you want it?"

"Immediately."

“The time to change my blouse and run up to the Academy.”

“I’ll go and pack my things.”

“Where shall I find you?”

“At Pastrini’s, Piazza di Spagna.”

“I’ll be there in two hours.”

True enough, in two hours Guichard was at the hotel with the passport all in good order. That same evening I took the coach for Angrisani, and reached Naples the next day but one. Obviously, I had so far nothing to complain of. But it was not enough to be in Naples, I might be discovered at any moment. I had known in Paris a very illustrious personage, who passed there for a marquis; he was now in Naples, where he passed for a spy. If I met him I was lost. It was urgent, therefore, to get over to Palermo or Messina. So, on the very day of our arrival we rushed, Jadin and I, to the port in search of a boat, steam or sails, which would take us to Sicily.

In all the countries of the world the arrival and departure of steamboats goes by rule; it is known what day they depart, what day they will arrive. Not so at Naples. The captain is the sole judge of the proper time for starting. When he has his full contingent of passengers he lights his fires and rings his bell. Until then he reposes, he and his boat. Unluckily for us it was now the 20th of August, and as no one was anxious to go and roast in Sicily with the glass at 90°, passengers did not turn up. The mate, who happened to be aboard the regular steamer, told us the vessel might not start for a week, and even then he could not warrant its departure.

We were standing on the Mole in despair at this check, and Milord was hunting a cat, when a sailor came up to us, cap in hand, and addressed us in the Sicilian patois. Little familiar as we were with that idiom, it was not so far away from Italian but that I managed to make out he was offering to take us wherever we wished. We then asked him on what he proposed to take us, inclined as we were to start on anything, no matter what it was. He immediately walked along the Mole before us, and stopping beside the lighthouse, he showed us, fifty feet distant and sleeping at her anchor, a charming little vessel of the usual tonnage of a coasting schooner, and so coquettishly painted in green and red that we were seized at once with a sympathy which showed itself no doubt in our faces, for without waiting for an answer, the sailor signed to a boat to come for us, sprang into it, and held out his hand to help us down.

Our *speronara*—that is the name they give in the Mediterranean to this class of little vessels—had nothing to lose on examination, and the nearer we came to her the better we could see, developing by degrees, the elegance of her shape and the brilliancy of her colouring. The result was that before we set foot on board we were half-resolved to take her.

We found the captain on board, — a handsome young man about twenty-eight to thirty years of age, with a frank and decided face. He spoke rather better Italian than his sailor. We were able to understand each other, or nearly so. A quarter of an hour later we had made a bargain at eight ducats

a day, for which sum the vessel and crew belonged to us, body and soul, planks and sails. We could keep her as long as we chose, take her where we chose, leave her when and where we chose; we were free; only, so long kept, so long paid. That was just.

I went down into the hold; the boat was in ballast. I required the captain to bind himself positively to take neither merchandise nor passengers; he gave me his word. His look was so honest that I asked him for no guarantee.

We returned to the deck and I inspected our cabin. It was simply a species of circular wooden tent set up at the stern and lashed to the timbers of the vessel with sufficient firmness to leave no reason to fear a squall or the shipping of a sea. Behind this tent was an open space left free for the handling of the tiller. This was the region of the pilot. The tent was entirely empty. It was our business to procure the necessary furniture; the captain of the *Santa-Maria di Pie di Grotta* not providing furnished quarters. But after all, in view of the limited space, these furnishings had to confine themselves to two mattresses, two pillows, and four pairs of sheets. The deck served as bedstead. As for the sailors, including the captain, they slept as usual between decks. We agreed to send our necessities that evening, and the hour for departure was fixed for the next day at eight in the morning.

We had gone about a hundred steps, congratulating ourselves, Jadin and I, on our decision, when the captain ran after us to advise us, above all, not to forget to bring a cook. The advice seemed so singu-

lar that I asked an explanation. I then learned that in the interior of Sicily, a wild and desolate region where the inns, when there are any, are only halting-places, a cook is a thing of prime necessity. We promised the captain to send one aboard with our belongings.

My first care on returning to the Hotel Vittoria was to inquire of the landlord, Monsieur Martin Zir, where the required *cordons-bleus* could be found. Monsieur Martin Zir replied that by marvellous luck he had the very thing on hand. At first his answer satisfied me so completely that I went to my room without inquiring further; but once there, I thought there would be no harm in making a few preliminary inquiries as to the moral qualities of our future fellow-traveller. Consequently, I questioned one of the servants of the hotel, who assured me I might feel quite easy, for Monsieur Martin was giving me his own cook. This self-sacrifice, far from reassuring me, only increased my fears. If Monsieur Martin was satisfied with his cook why did he yield him to the first stranger who came along? If he was not satisfied with him I, however easy-going I may be, would prefer another. I therefore went in search of Monsieur Martin, to ask him whether I could really rely on the honesty and culinary science of his protégé. Monsieur Martin replied with a pompous eulogy on the merits of Giovanni Cama. He was honesty personified, also he was perfectly skilled for the duties I was about to confide to him. As for that, indeed, he had the reputation of being the best *frittatore* not only in the capital, but in the kingdom.

But the more Monsieur Martin descanted on his virtues, the more my uneasiness increased, until at last I risked asking him why, possessing such a treasure, he consented to part with it.

"Alas," he answered, sighing, "he has, unfortunately for me who live in Naples, a defect which will be of no importance to you who are going to Sicily."

"What is it?" I asked anxiously.

"He is *appassionato*," replied Monsieur Martin.

I burst out laughing; for I must tell you that, in passing before the kitchen, Monsieur Martin had shown me Cama among his ovens, and Cama, throughout his person, from the top of his big head to the toes of his long feet, was certainly the man in the world to whom that epithet was least applicable. Besides which, an impassioned cook seemed to me to the last degree mythological. Nevertheless, observing that my landlord spoke with the utmost seriousness, I continued my questions.

"Impassioned with what?" I asked.

"With Rolando."

"With Rolando?" I repeated, thinking I heard ill.

"With Rolando," replied Monsieur Martin, with bated breath.

"Ah ça!" I said, beginning to think mine host was making fun of me, "it seems to me, my dear Monsieur Martin, that we are talking nonsense. Cama *appassionato* for Rolando, — what does that mean?"

"Have you ever been on the Mole?"

"I have just come from there, — from the light-house."

"Oh! but this is not the hour."

"Not the hour?"

"No. In order to understand what I shall now tell you, you ought to have been there in the evening, at the hour when the *improvisatores* sing. Have you been there in the evening?"

"How do you suppose I have been there in the evening? I arrived in Naples this morning and it is only two in the afternoon now."

"True. But you must have heard, among the traditional sayings about Naples, that when a *lazzarone* has earned two sous his day's work is done?"

"Yes."

"Do you know how he divides his two sous?"

"No. Is it indiscreet to inquire how?"

"Not the least in the world: one sou goes for macaroni, one farthing for watermelon, one farthing for the old folks, and one farthing for the *improvisatore*. The *improvisatore* is, after the food he eats, the water he drinks, the air he breathes, the most necessary thing to the *lazzarone*. Now, what does the *improvisatore* sing usually? He sings the poem of the divine Ariosto, the 'Orlando Furioso.' It results that for this primitive population, with excitable passions and ardent heads, fiction becomes reality; the tilts of paladins, the felonies of giants, the misfortunes of great ladies are not poesy, but history—a poor people who do not know their own history are in need of one! Hence they become infatuated with this that the *improvisatore* relates to them. Each selects his hero and becomes impassioned for him; some take Rinaldo, those are the young heads;

some prefer Rolando, those are the lovers ; others are for Charlemagne, they are the reasonable people. There is none of these beings, down to the wizard Merlin, who has not his proselyte. Now you understand, don't you ? how that animal of a Cama is impassioned for Rolando."

" Well, but what harm does that do you ? "

" Harm, indeed ! Why, when the hour for the improvisatore comes there is no way to keep him in the kitchen ; which, you must allow is very embarrassing in a house like mine, to which travellers are coming at all hours of the day and night. Even that is not the worst of it. I have a waiter who is a Rinaldist, and if I am so thoughtless as to send him into the kitchen at the dinner-hour, all is ruined ; an argument begins about one or other of those brave paladins ; high words ensue ; each exalts his hero and depreciates that of his adversary ; nothing is heard but the clashing of swords, the slaying of giants, the deliverance of the castle lady. As to the cooking, not a thought ! the soup boils away, the spits stop, the roast burns, the sauces sour, the dinner is bad, the guests complain, the hotel empties, and all because that rascal of a cook has taken it into his head to be *fanatico* for Rolando ! Now you understand, don't you ? "

" *Tiens !* it is funny."

" No, it is not funny at all, especially not for me. But as for you, it won't matter a bit. Once in Sicily, where his damned improvisatore and that crazy waiter can't turn his head, he will roast and fricassee wonderfully, and what is more, he will do anything

for you if you tell him now and then that Angelica was a good-for-nothing, and Medoro a rascalion."

"I'll tell him."

"Then you take him?"

"Of course, as you answer for him."

Cama was brought up. He made some objections as to the short time he had in which to prepare for such a journey, and the dangers he might be running; but I managed to slip in a graceful word about Rolando, and instantly his big eyes opened wide, his mouth stretched from ear to ear, he began to laugh inanely, and then, seduced by our communion of feeling as to the nephew of Charlemagne, he put himself entirely at my service. It resulted in my sending him on board that very night, as I had promised the captain, with the mattresses, pillows, sheets, and trunks. We ourselves followed him the next morning at the hour agreed upon.

All our sailors were on deck awaiting us. No doubt they were as impatient to know us as we to see them. The question of knowing whether our natures would be in sympathy with theirs was no less important to them than to us; for us, nearly all the pleasure we expected from our trip depended on it; for them, all their comfort and tranquillity for the next three months.

The crew consisted of nine men, a cabin-boy, and a child; all born or domiciled in the village Della Pace, near Messina. They were true Sicilians in the fullest meaning of the term; short of stature, robust of limb, swarthy in complexion, with Arab eyes; detesting the Calabrese, their neighbours, and exe-

crating the Neapolitans, their masters ; speaking the soft patois of Meli, which sounds like a song, scarcely comprehending the proud Florentine language ; always complying, never servile ; calling us “ Eccellenza ” and kissing our hands, because that formula and that action, which with us in France would seem degrading, with them in Sicily is simply the expression of politeness and devotion. By the end of the journey they had come to love us like brothers, all the while continuing to respect us as superiors ; a subtile distinction in which affection and duty kept their own places ; and they returned to us exactly that which we had a right to expect in exchange for our money and our kind treatment of them.

Their names were : Giuseppe Arena, captain, Nunzio, first pilot ; Vincenzo, second pilot ; Pietro, brother to Nunzio ; Giovanni, Filippo, Antonio, Sieni, Gaetano. The cabin-boy and the captain’s son, a *gamin* six or seven years old, completed the ship’s company. Now, if my readers permit, having cast a general eye over the speronara and her crew, we will take a more particular look at those of the brave fellows who distinguished themselves by their natures or by some speciality. We are about to make a rather long voyage in their company, and the reader, if disposed to take an interest in the tale, ought to know our companions by the way. I shall therefore make them visible at once to his eyes just as they appeared successively to ours.

Captain Giuseppe Arena was, as I have said, a handsome man, some twenty-eight or thirty years of age, with a frank and open face under ordinary cir-

cumstances, and a calm, impassible face in moments of danger. He had very little knowledge of navigation, but as he possessed some money, he had bought the vessel, and the purchase secured to him, naturally, the title of captain. As to any right or power which that title gave him over his men, we never once saw him make use of it. Aside from a slight tinge of respect which they showed him without his claiming it, the crew lived with him on a footing of equality that was truly patriarchal.

Nunzio the pilot was, after the captain, the most important person on board. He was a man of fifty, short and robust, with a swarthy skin, gray hair, and a rugged face, who had navigated from childhood. He was clothed in blue linen trousers and a woollen shirt; to these strict necessities he added on cold or rainy days a species of hooded cloak which combined, in a way, the overcoat of the West with the burnous of the desert. This cloak, which was brown in colour and embroidered on the pocket-holes and openings for the arms with red and blue thread, fell straight and stiff, giving an admirable character to his general appearance. Nunzio was the essential, or rather, the indispensable man: he was the eye that kept watch for rocks, the ear that listened for the wind, the hand that guided the vessel. In heavy weather the captain became a simple sailor and made over to Nunzio the whole power. Then from the tiller, which, no matter what the weather was, he never quitted except for evening prayer, he gave his orders with such firmness and precision that the crew obeyed him as one man. His authority lasted as long as the

tempest. Then, when he had saved the vessel and the lives of those on board of her, he sat down, simple and calm, in the stern of the boat and became once more Nunzio the pilot. But, although he relinquished his authority, he kept his influence; for Nunzio, religious, like all true sailors, was considered the equal of the prophets. His predictions with reference to the weather, which he foresaw by signs imperceptible to other eyes, had never been contradicted by events; so that the affection which the crew bore to him was mingled with a certain religious respect, which at first surprised us, but which we ended by sharing, so great is the influence upon all men, no matter what their condition, of superiority, be it what it may.

Vicenzo, whom I place third, more to follow the hierarchy of rank than because of his real importance, bore the title of second pilot. It was he who took Nunzio's place in the rare and short moments when the latter left the helm. During the calm nights they watched by turns. At other times, even when his help was useless in directing the vessel, Vicenzo continued to sit beside the old prophet, exchanging rare words with him and oftenest in a whisper. This habit isolated him from the rest of the crew; also he seldom appeared among us, and never spoke unless we questioned him; he then accomplished the act of replying as a duty and with all the formulas of politeness in use among sailors. In other respects an excellent, worthy man, and, after Nunzio who was a prodigy in this respect, enduring in a marvellous manner fatigue and sleeplessness.

After these three authorities came Pietro ; Pietro was a jovial comrade who filled among the crew the place of wag to a regiment ; always gay, constantly singing, dancing, and grimacing ; eternal talker, frantic dancer, fanatical swimmer, agile as a monkey, of which he had the motions, mingling with the working of the ship grotesque capers and comical little cries flung out after the manner of Auriol ; ready for anything, joining in everything, understanding all, full of good-will and friendly familiarity, he was the most intimate with us of all his companions. Pietro allied himself at once with our bull-dog. The latter, of a nature less facile, less sociable, answered his advances for a long time with low growls, changing after a while into amicable murmurs, and finally into a solid and lasting friendship ; though Pietro, hampered in his pronunciation by the Sicilian accent, could never manage to call Milord anything but Melor,—a change which at first seemed to wound his self-respect, though he ended by answering Pietro's call as if the latter had given him his right name.

Giovanni, a large, fat fellow, a Southerner, with the white skin and puffy cheeks of a Northerner, constituted himself our cook from the moment friend Cama was seized with sea-sickness, which happened to him ten minutes after the speronara had got under way. Giovanni added to his culinary science a talent which belongs to it or of which it is, strictly speaking, the consequence—that of a harpooner. In fine weather, Giovanni fastened to the poop a bit of twine, four or five feet in length, to the extremity

of which he appended either a chicken-bone or a crust of bread. That twine never floated more than ten minutes in our wake before it was escorted by seven or eight fish of all shapes and all colours, most of them unknown in our ports, but among which we nearly always recognized the dory by its gilded scales, and the bass by its voracity. Then Giovanni took his harpoon, lying ready to larboard or starboard near the oars, and called us. We went with him to the stern and selected, according to our appetite or our curiosity, from among the finny tribe that followed us, the one that suited us best. Our choice made, Giovanni raised his harpoon, aimed for an instant at the selected fish, and then the weapon sank hissing into the sea, only to return a second later to the surface of the water. Then Giovanni drew it towards him by means of a rope fastened to his arm, and at the opposite extremity we saw, ten times out of twelve, the luckless fish pierced through and through. The work of the fisherman was then over and that of the cook began. Now it happened that without being actually sea-sick we were constantly inclined that way, and it was not always an easy thing to tempt our appetites. A discussion was immediately started as to the mode of cooking and seasoning the dish. No turbot ever gave rise among solemn Roman senators to more learned and profound dissertations than those on which we entered, Jadin and I. As, for greater facility, we discussed the matter in our own language, the crew stood by, motionless and mute, until the decision was made. Giovanni alone, guessing from the expression of our eyes the meaning of our words,

emitted from time to time an opinion which revealed to us some mysterious preparation, and usually carried the day against our own. The sauce thus decided, he seized the handle of the gridiron or that of the frying-pan; Pietro scraped the fish and lighted the fire between decks; Milord, who was never sea-sick and knew that many fish-bones and skins were coming to him, wagged his tail and moaned amorously. The fish was cooked, and soon Giovanni served it to us on the long plank which answered for a table, our quarters being so narrow on the little vessel that there was no room for an actual table. Its appetizing appearance gave us the highest hopes; then, at the third or fourth mouthful, sea-sickness obstinately claimed its rights, and the crew fell heirs to the fish, which went from aft to forward instantly, followed by Milord, who never lost sight of it from the moment it lay upon the gridiron or the frying-pan till its last morsel was swallowed by the cabin-boy.

Next comes Filippo: grave as a quaker, serious as a doctor, silent as a fakir. We never heard him laugh but twice during the whole course of our voyage: the first time when our friend Cama fell into the sea in the gulf of Agrigentum; the second time when the captain's back took fire, he having, by my advice and to cure his rheumatism, rubbed his loins with camphorated brandy. As for Filippo's words, I think we did not have a single opportunity to know their sound or their style. The good or bad condition of his mind was manifested by sad or lively whistling, with which he accompanied the songs of his ship-mates, though he never sang him-

self. I thought for a long time that he was dumb, and I did not say a word to him for nearly a month, for fear of giving him pain by reminding him of his infirmity. He was the strongest diver that I have ever seen. Sometimes we amused ourselves by flinging a bit of money from the poop into the water; in a trice he was stripped as the coin sank and after it into the depths of the sea, where we lost him from sight in spite of the transparency of the water; then, watch in hand, after forty or fifty seconds we saw him reappear, perfectly calm and without apparent effort, as if he inhabited his native element and had merely done the most natural thing in the world. Needless to say that he brought up the coin, and that the coin was henceforth his.

Antonio was the minstrel of the crew. He sang the tarantella with a perfection and a dash that never missed their effect. At times we were seated, some on deck, others between decks; conversation languished and silence fell; suddenly Antonio would begin that electric tune which is to the Neapolitan and Sicilian what the *ranz des vaches* is to the Switzer. On which Filippo would raise gravely one half of his body through the hatchway and whistle an accompaniment. Then Pietro would begin to beat time, wagging his head from left to right and clacking his thumbs like castanets. But at the fifth or sixth bar a visible agitation seized him; his whole body put itself in motion; he rose on one knee, next on both, then he was up altogether. For a few seconds longer he stood, swaying from right to left, but not quitting his place; then, as if the planks of the vessel were

heating gradually, he lifted one foot, then the other, until, flinging out one of the little cries I mentioned expressive of his joy, he began the famous national dance; at first with a slow and uniform movement, which, accelerating ever and hastened by the music, ended at last in a species of frenzied jig. The tarantella never ended until the dancer fell exhausted after a final caper in which the whole of the choregraphic scene was summed up.

The last is Sieni, of whom I have no recollection, and Gaetano, whom we seldom saw, because he was kept ashore by an attack of ophthalmia, which appeared on the day after our arrival in the Straits of Messina. I do not speak of the cabin-boy; he was, quite naturally, what that estimable class of society is in all parts of the world — the drudge of the whole ship's company. The only difference between him and the other individuals of his species lay in the good nature of his comrades, which caused him to be more than half less beaten than he would have been on a Breton or a Genoese schooner.

And now my readers know the crew of the *Santa-Maria di Pie di Grotta* as well as I do myself.

As I have said, they were all awaiting us on the deck of the little vessel, and she, taut at her anchor, was ready to depart. I made a last turn between decks and through the cabin to convince myself that our provisions and property were all aboard. I found Cama between decks joyfully established among the chickens and ducks intended for our table, and setting in order his kitchen utensils. In the cabin I found our beds all covered, and Milord already

installed on that of his master. Everything was in its place and all were at their posts. The captain then came to me and asked my orders. I told him to wait five minutes. Those five minutes were consecrated to giving news of me to the Comte de Ludorf. I took from my portfolio a sheet of my finest paper and wrote to him the following letter :

MONSIEUR LE COMTE, — I am extremely sorry that your Excellency did not see fit to charge me with your commissions for Naples. I should certainly have executed them with a fidelity which would have proved to you my gratitude for your kind proceedings towards me.

Be pleased to accept, Monsieur le comte, an assurance of the very lively sentiments that I feel for you, of which I trust I may some day offer you the proof.¹

ALEX. DUMAS.

NAPLES, August 23, 1835.

While I was writing, the anchor was raised and the rowers ranged themselves to starboard and larboard, oars in hand, all ready to start. I asked the captain for a safe man to carry my letter to the post; he directed me to one of the spectators assembled to see us off, who, he said, was an acquaintance of his. I passed him the letter, accompanied by two *carlini*,

¹ That proof was delayed until 1841, the period at which I published the first edition of this book. But, as the reader will have seen, I have made up in it for time lost, and I hope that M. le Comte de Ludorf, who may have accused me of forgetfulness, will correct that error in relation to me, if by chance these pages should have the honour to come before his eyes. — A. D.

by means of a long fishing-rod, and I had the satisfaction of seeing my messenger scamper at top speed in the direction of the post-office.

I then gave the signal for departure. The eight oars which the men held erect in the air, fell together and struck the water at the same instant. Ten minutes later we were out of the harbour, and a quarter of an hour later we were shaking out our lesser sails to an excellent wind off shore, which promised to put me rapidly out of reach of the Neapolitan agents whom the Comte de Ludorf would probably set upon my traces.

The good wind accompanied us for some twenty or thirty miles, but just beyond Sorrento it slackened, and presently fell altogether, so that we were forced to have recourse to the oars. This gave us time to perceive that the sea-breeze had given us an appetite. Consequently, being well disposed to appreciate the good qualities of M. Martin Zir's protégé, we called, in our finest bass voice, for Cama. No one answered. Uneasy at his silence, we sent Pietro and Giovanni in search of him, and five minutes later we saw him appear at the orifice of the hatchway, pale as a ghost, supported under each arm by the men we had sent to fetch him, who had found him stretched motionless among his ducks and chickens. It was evidently impossible for the poor devil to attend to our orders. He couldn't stand upon his legs, and he turned his eyes in a lamentable manner. Thinking that the air would do him good, we had a mattress brought on deck and laid him upon it at the foot of the mast. We were looking at each

other, Jadin and I, with a disconcerted air, when Giovanni put himself at our orders, offering to take the place, for a time at least, of our poor *appassionato*.

We promptly accepted the proposal. The captain, who was not proud, at once took the oar that Giovanni abandoned. Five minutes had not elapsed before we heard the moans of a strangling fowl; presently we saw smoke escaping up the hatchway; next came the sound of oil sizzling over the fire; and a quarter of an hour later we each had our share of a *poulet à la Provençale*, which, thanks to the above-named appetite, we found excellent.

Towards two o'clock we were off the island of Capri. As in losing our time we lost but little, inasmuch as the unceasing toil of our rowers could make us do no more than half a league an hour, I proposed to Jadin to land, and visit the island of Tiberius and the ruins of his palace, which we could see from below about one third up the path to Monte Solaro. Jadin accepted heartily, thinking there would surely be some fine view to sketch. The captain, informed of our intentions, headed the *speronara* for the island, and an hour later we entered the port.

II

CAPRI. LA BURRASCA

THERE are few places in the world that offer so many historical memories as Capri. It was only an island like other islands, more smiling, perhaps, and that was all, when Augustus resolved one day to make a trip to it. At the moment of his landing, an old oak, the sap of which seemed shrivelled forever, lifted its withered branches already pendent to the soil and burst incontinently into buds and leafage. Augustus was a man of omens ; he was so enchanted with this particular one that he proposed to the Neapolitans to give them the island of Ænaria if they would cede him that of Capri. The offer was accepted. Augustus made Capri a region of delight, lived there four years, and when he died bequeathed the island to Tiberius.

Tiberius, in his turn, retired there, much as an old tiger slinks into his lair when he feels he is dying. There alone, surrounded by vessels that guarded him day and night, did he feel himself safe from daggers and poison. On those rocks where to-day there are but ruins, rose then a dozen imperial villas, bearing the names of the twelve great gods of Olympus. Each of them, supported on marble columns the gilded capitals of which bore up the agate friezes,

served the emperor for a fortress residence for one month of the year; in all were basins of porphyry, where the silvery fishes of the Ganges sparkled; pavements of mosaic, the designs of which were formed by opals, emeralds, and rubies; deep and secret baths where lascivious pictures excited terrible desires, recalling unheard-of excesses. Around these villas, on the flanks of the mountain, bare to-day, rose then two cedar forests and groves of orange-trees, where handsome youths and beautiful young girls, disguised as fauns and dryads, satyrs, and bacchantes, sang hymns to Venus, while invisible instruments accompanied their amorous voices. And when the night, one of those transparent, starry nights such as the East alone can make for love, came down upon the sleeping sea; when the balmy breeze blowing from Sorrento or Pompeii mingled with the perfumes that children, clothed as Cupids, burned on golden tripods; when cries voluptuous, harmonies mysterious, sighs half-stifled quivered vague and confused, as though the amorous isle were thrilling with delight in the arms of her briny god; a mighty pharos flared forth like a nocturnal sun. Soon, by its gleam could be seen, issuing from some grotto and walking along the shore between Thrasyllus, the astrologer, and Charicles, the physician, an old man clothed in purple, with bent and stiffened neck and silent, gloomy visage, shaking from time to time a mass of silvery hair that fell undulating, like the mane of a lion, on his heavy shoulders. A few slow, drawling words dropped from his lips, while his hand, with effeminate gesture, caressed the head

of a snake that slept on his bosom. Those words, they were Greek verses he was then composing; they were orders for secret debauchery in the villa of Jupiter or of Ceres; they were sentences to death, which, on the morrow, would fly with lateen sails to Ostia and terrify Rome; for this old man was the third Cæsar, the divine Tiberius, the emperor with savage eyes, like those of a cat, a wolf, an hyena, eyes that saw clear in darkness.

To-day, of all these magnificences nothing remains but wreck and ruin; but, more indestructible than stone or marble, the memory of that old emperor is left entire. One might fancy, so much his name is still on every tongue, that it was but yesterday they laid him in the parricidal grave Caligula prepared for him and into which Marconius pushed him. One might even say that in default of his body, men tremble still before his shade; for the inhabitants of Capri and Anacapri, the towns of the isle, show the remains of his palaces with as much awe as that with which they point to the slumbering volcano which, on any day, at any hour, at every minute may awake, more deadly, more devouring than ever.

The two towns are situated, Capri, in an amphitheatre before the little harbour, Anacapri at the summit of Monte Solaro. A stairway of five or six hundred steps, roughly cut into the rock, leads from the first to the second of these towns. The fatigue of this toilsome ascension is largely repaid, I must say, by the splendid panorama which the eye takes in when the summit is attained. The traveller, facing Naples, sees Pæstum first on his right, voluptuous

daughter of Greece, whose roses, blooming twice each year in an air that was fatal to virginity, were culled to fade on the brow of Horace and drop their leaves on the table of Mæcenas ; then Sorrento, where each passing breeze bears away with it the leaves of the orange and the lemon flowers, to scatter them afar upon the sea ; then Pompeii, sleeping in her ashes and waking at times like some old ruin of Egypt, with her ardent pictures, her lachrymal vases, and her mortuary fillets ; and, lastly, Herculaneum, who, overtaken one day by the lava, shrieked, and writhed, and died like Laocoon in the coils of the serpents. Then comes Naples — for Torre del Greco, Resina, and Portici are, to tell the truth, mere suburbs — Naples, the lazy city, lying in the lap of her circling mountains and stretching her little feet to the warm and wanton waves of her gulf. Then, after Naples, the eye turns leftward, to Pozzuoli with its temple of Serapis, half hidden in the water ; to Cumæ, most ancient of all the Grecian-Italian cities, with her mysterious, sibylline grotto, where the pious Æneas landed ; to the gulf, where Caligula, emulating Xerxes, flung a bridge a league long, still perceptible among the ruins ; to Bauli whence sailed that imperial galley prepared by Nero to open beneath the feet of Agrippina ; and finally, to Baiæ, so fatal to chaste lovers, and Misenum, where the trumpeter of Æneas lies buried, and where Pliny the elder went to die, smothered in his library by the ashes of Stabia.

Imagine the picture now described, illumined by the pharos that is called Vesuvius, and tell me if

there be in all the world aught that can compare with such a spectacle.

I took this walk alone. Jadin had found a view to sketch and stopped at a third of the steep way up. Coming down I rejoined him, and we returned together to the little port. There we were surrounded by a score of boatmen, each determined to carry one or other of us off with him. These were the guides to the Blue Grotto. As no one can come to Capri without seeing the Blue Grotto — Grotto Azzurra — I chose one man and Jadin another, because each traveller must have a boat and a boatman, the entrance being so low and narrow that only the slenderest wherry can enter it.

The sea was calm, but it always breaks, even in the finest weather, with such force against the girdle of rocks which surrounds the island that our boats bounded as if in a tempest and we were forced to cling tightly to the thwarts for fear of being flung into the sea. At last, after rowing for three-quarters of an hour and doing at least one-sixth of the circumference of the isle, our boatmen told us we had arrived. We looked about; not the slightest appearance of the smallest of grottoes did we see until they showed us a round black speck, scarcely visible above the foam of the waves; this, they said, was the orifice of the cave.

The first sight of that entrance is not reassuring; it seems incomprehensible how to pass through it without crushing one's head. As that question appeared to us of sufficient importance to discuss, we laid it before our boatmen. They said we were perfectly

right if we remained seated, but, by lying flat in the boat we escaped all danger. Jadin and I had not come so far to balk. I set the example; my boatman advanced, rowing with precautions which showed plainly that however used he might be to the operation he did not consider it exempt from danger. As for me, in my then position, I could see nothing but the sky; presently I felt myself lifted on a wave, the boat gliding rapidly, and I saw a rock above me that seemed about to crush my breast. Then, all of a sudden, I found myself in so wonderful a grotto that I uttered a cry of astonishment and sprang up so hastily to look about me that I nearly upset the wherry.

Before me, around me, above me, beneath me, behind me, were marvels of which no words can give an idea, and before which the artist's brush itself, that great transmitter of human recollections, is powerless. Imagine a vast azure cavern, all azure, as if God had pleased himself by making a tent of a bit of the firmament; water so limpid, so transparent, so pure, that we seemed to be floating on a substance of air; stalactites pendent from the roof like pyramids reversed; in the depths a golden sand mingled with many submarine vegetations; along the walls, bathed softly by the water, bunches of coral with capricious glittering branches; on the sea side a speck, a star, through which came the glimmering light that illumined this fairy palace; and directly opposite, a species of throne for the sumptuous goddess, whoever she was, who had chosen for her bathroom one of the wonders of the world.

Suddenly the grotto darkened, like the earth on a splendid day when a cloud flits across the sun. It was Jadin entering the cavern, the orifice of which was closed by his boat. Presently it was floated beside me by the force of the wave that lifted it to the entrance, the grotto resumed its beautiful azure colour, and the boat stopped, trembling, near mine; for this sea, so noisy and tumultuous without, had the gentle, silent respiration of a lake within.

According to all probability the Blue Grotto was unknown to the ancients. No poet speaks of it, and certainly the Greeks with their marvellous imagination would never have missed making it the palace of some marine goddess with melodious name, whose history they would surely have left us. Suetonius, who describes with such detail the baths and thermæ of Tiberius, would not have failed to give a few words to this natural pool, which the old emperor would doubtless have chosen as the scene of some monstrous pleasure. No, the tides were perhaps higher in those days than they are now, and this marvel of the deep was known only to Amphitrite and her court of sirens, naiads, and tritons.

But sometimes, like Diana overtaken by Actæon, Amphitrite is angered by the indiscreet travellers who pursue her in this azure retreat. Then, in a moment, the sea rises and shuts the orifice, so that those within can no longer get out. In that case, they must wait till the wind, that has veered of a sudden from east to west, comes round to the southward. It has sometimes happened that visitors going to the grotto for twenty minutes have stayed there

two, three, and even four days. Consequently the boatmen, providing for such accidents, always carry with them a certain quantity of a species of biscuit to feed the prisoners. As for water, it filters into the grotto at two or three points with sufficient abundance, so that no fear need be felt on the score of thirst. I blamed my boatman a little for having delayed informing me of a fact so disquieting; but he answered with charming naïveté:

“Ma che! eccellenza, if we told it at first half the travellers would not go, and that would be bad for the boatmen.”

I own that this little circumstance gave me a certain uneasiness and made me think the Blue Grotto less charming than it seemed at first. Unluckily, our boatmen had given us these details just as we were taking off our clothes to bathe in that azure water, so beautiful, so transparent that it needs no Undine of Goethe's to entice the fisher. We were not willing to abandon the preparations we had made, so we completed those that were still to make in all haste, and each took a header into the water.

Not until one is five or six feet below the surface can the incredible purity of the water be appreciated. In spite of the veil that wraps the diver not a detail escapes him; he sees as clearly as through the air the smallest shell on the sand or the slenderest stalactite from the roof; only, each thing takes a darker tint. At the end of fifteen minutes we returned to our boats and dressed, without having allured, so far as we could see, any of the invisible nymphs of that humid palace who, had it been otherwise, would surely

not have failed to detain us for twenty-four hours at the least. This was humiliating; but as neither of us assumed to be Telemachus we accepted the situation. Again we lay down in the bottom of our respective boats and left the Azure Grotto with the same precautions and the same good luck with which we had entered it; except that we were fully six minutes unable to open our eyes; the dazzling brightness of the sun now blinded us. We were scarcely a furlong distant when all that we had just seen became the mere fabric of a dream.

We returned to the port of Capri. While settling our account with the boatmen, Pietro pointed out to us a man lying in the sunshine with his face in the sand. He was the fisherman who, nine or ten years earlier, had discovered the Blue Grotto while searching for mussels among the rocks. He went at once to the authorities of the island, told them of his discovery, and asked for the privilege of alone conducting travellers into the new world he had found, or else a toll upon the pay of others who might do so. The authorities, seeing in this discovery a means of attracting strangers to their isle, acceded to his second proposition; so that since that time this second Christopher Columbus lives on his income, which he takes no trouble to acquire, for it comes to him, as we saw, when sleeping. He was the personage whose fate was most envied throughout the island.

Having seen all that Capri offered of chief interest we got into our own boat and returned to the speronara, which, profiting by a few puffs of the land breeze, hoisted sail and headed gently for Palermo.

But soon the weather changed ; the sky seemed covered by some vast gray texture on which stood out in darker gray and brown a heavy cloud advancing rapidly from the south to meet us. From time to time light puffs of wind filled our sails, which were spread to profit by them, because coming from the eastward, they were favourable for taking us to Palermo. But soon, whether these puffs died away, or because the first breath of a contrary wind coming from Sicily, began to flatten our great sail against the mast, the pilot suddenly gave orders to furl it. When the weather was threatening the captain instantly resigned, as I think I have already said, his powers to old Nunzio, and became himself the first and most docile of the crew. So when the pilot called out to clear the deck he was the most active of them all in removing our table and in helping Jadin to bring into the cabin his stool and his drawing-boards.

During this time the sky grew darker still and the atmosphere gave every sign of a coming storm. Our sailors, without being warned in any way of danger, this being their hour for sleeping, awoke as if by instinct and came on deck, one after another, through the forward hatch, their noses in the air snuffing the wind ; then they lined up on deck, winked at one another with a nod that surely meant to say, "It is coming — hot !" Still silent, some of them rolled up their sleeves, others threw off their shirts. Filippo alone sat still on the edge of the hatch, his legs dangling down into the hold, his chin resting on his hand as he gazed at the sky with his impassible face and whistled from habit the tarantella. But this

time Pietro was deaf to that provocative air, and even old Nunzio seemed to think its monotonous melody untimely, for mounting the bulwark without letting go of the helm, he raised his head above the cabin roof and said, addressing the crew as though he did not see the musician: "With permission of the signore, who is that whistling now?"

"I think it is me, old man," replied Filippo, "but, God's truth, I was n't thinking what I did."

"Very good," said Nunzio, disappearing behind the cabin. Filippo did not whistle again.

The sea, though still calm, was visibly changing in colour. From the azure blue it had been all day, it was now becoming an ashen gray. On its tarnished mirror great air-bubbles were bursting that seemed to rise, like sighs, from the depths of its bosom to its surface. From time to time the passing squalls, that sailors call "cat's-paws," scratched the sombre water and left upon it lines of gleaming foam, as if some invisible hand had beaten it with rods. Our speronara, having no wind, and being no longer rowed by the sailors, was, if not motionless, at any rate stationary, swaying in the swell which was just beginning to make itself felt. There was now one quarter of an hour of total silence; all the more solemn because the mist that gathered round us had, little by little, hidden the shore, and we knew that we were about to face the tempest thus solemnly announcing itself, not in a ship, but in a mere little fishing-boat. I looked at our men; they were all on deck, ready for action and calm, but their calmness was that of resolution not of security.

“Captain,” I said, going up to him, “do not forget that we are men; if the danger becomes real, let us know it.”

“Be sure of that,” replied the captain.

“Well, poor Milord!” said Jadin, giving his bulldog a pat that might have killed an ordinary dog, “we are to see a little tempest; does that please you, hey?”

Milord responded with a low, prolonged howl, which proved that he was not indifferent to the passing scene, and that instinctively he, too, smelt danger.

“The mistral!” shouted the pilot, raising his head above the cabin roof.

Instantly every eye was fixed on the wake. We saw, if I may say so, the coming of the wind; a line of foam ran before it, and behind that line we saw the sea beginning to rise in billows. The sailors sprang, some to the bowsprit, some to the little mizzen-mast, to set the jib and also a triangular sail, the name of which I did not know, but it seemed to correspond to the mainsail of larger ships. During this time the mistral was coming down upon us like a race-horse, preceded by a hissing that was not without some majesty. We felt it pass; then instantly our little vessel shuddered, her sails swelled as if to burst, she plunged her prow into the sea, cleaving it like a ploughshare, and we felt ourselves borne along as a feather in the wind.

“But,” I said to the captain, “I thought that in such heavy weather, instead of giving chances to the gale, as we are doing, it was usual to lower the sails. How is it we are not doing as usual?”

“Oh!” he replied, “we have not got to that point yet; the wind now blowing is fair, and if it will only hold for twelve hours, at the thirteenth we shall not be far—I will not say from Palermo, but—from Messina. Are you very anxious to go to Palermo before you go to Messina?”

“No; I am anxious to go to Sicily, and that’s all. So you say that the wind we are now having is good?”

“Excellent; but the misfortune is it has a mortal enemy—the sirocco; and as the sirocco comes from the southeast and the mistral from the northwest, if they happen to meet before long there’ll be a pretty battle. Meantime, we must profit by that which God has sent us to make as much way as possible.”

And in truth our *speronara* was going like an arrow, making great flocks of foam fly from her flanks. The weather grew worse and worse; clouds seemed to leave the sky and lower upon the sea; great drops of rain began to fall.

We made thus, in less than an hour, about nine or ten miles; but the rain became so violent that much as we wished to stay on deck, we were forced to take refuge in our cabin. As we passed near the after-hatchway we saw our cook rolling among a dozen casks or barrels as perfectly unconscious as if he were dead. From the moment he set foot on board, sea-sickness caught him, and at the hour of meals we had so far obtained nothing from him but heart-rending groans about the folly of ever embarking.

We returned to the cabin and flung ourselves on our mattresses. Milord, now meek as a lamb, followed his master with his head and his tail between his legs. But hardly had we entered before we heard a great uproar on deck, and the words, "Burrasca! burrasca!" shouted by the pilot, attracted our attention. At the same instant our little vessel began to dance in so singular a manner that I knew the sirocco and the mistral had met, and that those two old enemies were fighting on our back. Thunder now took part in the fray, and we heard its rumble above the infernal uproar of the winds, the waves, and our sailors. Suddenly, commanding this clamour of men and sea and wind and thunder, the voice of the pilot was heard shouting, in those tones that mean instantaneous obedience: "Tutto a basso!" — "Down with all!"

The deck resounded with the steps of our sailors and with their shouts to excite one another; but, in spite of the good-will they gave to their work, the speronara leaned over so much to larboard that, unable to keep my balance at an angle of forty-five degrees, I rolled upon Jadin. We then comprehended that something unusual was happening, and we sprang to the door of the cabin; a wave which rushed to enter as we were leaving it confirmed this opinion; but we clung to the door and maintained our position in spite of the shock. Though it was only five or six o'clock in the afternoon, absolutely nothing could be seen, the darkness was so black, the rain so heavy. We called to the captain to know what was happening; the answer came only in be-

wildering shouts. A peal of awful thunder was heard, the heavens appeared to burst into flame and open, and we saw our men, from the captain to the cabin boy, struggling to lower the large sail, while the wet ropes, refusing to run through the blocks, defeated them. During this time the schooner heeled over more and more until she was literally running on her flank and the tip of her boom was in the water.

"Down! down!" shouted the pilot in a voice that showed there was no time to lose: "In God's name! down all!"

"Cut! cut!" cried the captain. "There's canvas in Messina, *pardieu!*"

At that instant we saw a man fly, as it were, above our heads; that man, or rather that shadow sprang from the roof of the cabin to the bulwark, from the bulwark to the spar, and we heard the little shriek of a parting rope. The sail, taut and swelling as it had been, now flew loose, tearing itself from the bonds that held it to the spar. Checked for an instant by the last link, it floated like an immense banner from the end of the boom, and then, that last obstacle yielding like the rest, the sail disappeared, like a white cloud driven by the wind, in the depths of the murky heavens. The speronara righted, and all the crew gave a shout of joy.

As for the pilot, he had already returned to his post and was seated by his tiller.

"Faith!" said the captain, coming up to me, "We've made a fine escape. I thought for a minute we were going to turn heels over head, and without

the old man, who was there in the nick of time, I don't know what would have happened."

"Tell me, captain," I said. "I think he well deserves a bottle of Bordeaux wine; can I send it to him?"

"To-morrow, not to-night; to-night not a single glass; we want his whole head, don't you see; it is God who sends us, but it is he who pilots us, and we are not at Messina yet."

"It seems to me," said Jadin, "that the storm is over."

In fact, at that moment there was truce between the mistral and the sirocco, so that the vessel was decidedly more tranquil, though she still had the quivering air of a frightened horse. The captain mounted a bench and exchanged a few words over the roof of the cabin with the pilot.

"Yes, yes," said the latter, "no harm in that, though we shall not be quiet very long. Yes, that will help us to gain a mile or two."

"What are you going to do?" I asked.

"Profit by a lucky moment to make a little way by rowing. Ohé! children," he continued, "the oars! to the oars!"

The sailors sprang to them, pushing them over the gunwale like the paws of some gigantic animal, and beginning to beat the sea. At the first dip the usual song of our sailors began, but this time, after the danger we had just run, it seemed to me gentler, more melancholy than before. One must have heard that melody under like circumstances and on such a night to form an idea of the effect it produced upon

us. These men who sang thus between a passed danger and a coming one were a sacred and living image of Faith.

The truce lasted half an hour, or nearly that. Then the rain began to fall more heavily than ever, the thunder growled, the heavens opened and flamed, and the cry already heard, "*Burrasca! la burrasca!*" echoed once more from behind the cabin. The sailors at once drew in their oars, laid them along the deck, and prepared to work the ship.

We then had a repetition of the scene I have just related, minus the incident of the sail, but plus an event that took its place with a certain degree of success. We were just at the height of the tempest, bounding, veering, turning about at the fitful will of winds and waves, when suddenly a huge, fantastic, mysterious head appeared through the aperture of the after-hatchway, absolutely after the manner in which the devil comes up through a trap-door at the Opera, and after crying out three times, "*Aqua! aqua! aqua!*" sank again into the depths of the hold below. I fancied I recognized Giovanni.

This apparition was seen not by me only, but by the whole crew. The captain said two words to Pietro, who disappeared in his turn through the hatchway. A second later he returned with visible emotion and going to the captain murmured, "*It is true!*"

The captain came to us at once.

"Listen," he said, "it seems that there is a leak in the hold; if it is a large leak, as we have no pumps, we are in danger. Do not keep anything on you but

your trousers, so as to be free in case you are obliged to jump overboard. In that case seize a plank, a barrel, an oar, the first thing that comes to hand. We are in the main track from Naples to Palermo; some vessel will pass, and we shall escape, I hope, with a bath of some hours."

And the captain, thinking that these words needed no comments and that the danger needed his presence, disappeared down the hatchway himself, while Jadin and I retired to the cabin, where, after providing for each of us a belt containing all the gold we had on board, we proceeded to take off hats, coats, boots, and shirts.

When we reappeared on deck in our swimming garb, we found the sailors awaiting silently the return of the captain, and saw the pilot's head lifted above the roof of the cabin, proving that he attached no less importance than the crew to what the captain might report.

The latter came up laughing. The leak was occasioned by a cask of ice which we had brought from Naples to cool our wine; the rolling of the schooner upset it, the ice melted, and it was this frozen water, invading the mattress of poor Cama the cook, which had terrified him for a moment out of his torpor and brought him up to give the warning cry that terrified the crew.

This burrasca passed off like the first, and Jadin and I, worn out with fatigue and excitement, retired to our cabin and flung ourselves on the mattresses. I don't know what happened to Jadin, but I myself was asleep in ten minutes.

I was awakened by the most infernal tumult I had ever heard in my life. All our sailors were shouting at once, and running like madmen from the fore-castle aft, passing over the roof of the cabin, which cracked under their feet as if it were coming down. I tried to get out, but the motion of the schooner was so violent that I could not keep my legs, and I rolled rather than walked to the door, where I clung so tightly that I managed to keep myself standing.

"What the devil is it now?" I asked Jadin, who was tranquilly looking at the scene with his hands in his pockets and smoking his pipe.

"Oh! good heavens!" he said, "nothing at all, or next to nothing; only a three-decker trying to ride us down under pretence he does n't see us."

"Where is he?"

"There," replied Jadin, moving his hands towards the stern, "there, don't you see him?"

At the same instant I saw, looming up out of the sea where he seemed to plunge, the giant triton who was chasing us. He rose on the breast of a wave so that he commanded the speronara as an old castle commands a plain from its mountain. Nearly at the same instant, by the play, as it were, of a monstrous see-saw, we went up and he went down, so that we came upon the level of his topgallant-sails. Then, for the first time no doubt, he saw us, and he made a movement bearing to the right while we made ours to the left. He passed us like a phantom and we heard the words: "Bon voyage!" flung to us through a trumpet from his poop. Then the great

ship rushed on like a race-horse into the darkness and disappeared.

"That is Admiral Mollo," said the captain, "who is no doubt going to Palermo with The Ferdinand. It was high time he saw us, faith! Otherwise 't would have been a bad lookout for us."

"Where are we now, captain?"

"Oh! we have made good way, I can tell you; we are among the Islands. Look out on this side and in ten minutes you'll see the flames of Stromboli."

I turned in the direction to which he pointed, and there, before the time he fixed had expired, I saw the whole horizon take on a ruddy glow, and I heard a noise something like that of a battery of a dozen cannon fired successively, one after another. It was Stromboli, — to us a beacon, for it showed the rapidity with which we were moving. When I first heard the sound it was forward of the vessel, soon it was on our right, and presently behind us. Meanwhile it was almost three in the morning, and day began to dawn.

Never in my life did I see so splendid a sight. Little by little the storm had ceased, though the mistral continued to let us feel it. The sea was once more of an azure blue, presenting an image of moving Alps, with sombre valleys and crests of mountains crowned with a snow-white foam. Our speronara, light as a leaf, was swept along this surface, rising, descending, rising again to descend again with terrifying rapidity, and yet with supreme intelligence. And this was because old Nunzio never left the tiller; at the instant when one of the liquid moun-

tains swelled up astern, rushing onward as if to engulf us, with a slight motion he would throw the speronara to one side and we felt the huge billow, sinking momentarily and seething beneath us, take us gently on its sturdy shoulders and lift us to its highest crest; so that for two or three leagues around we were able to look down upon all the peaks and all the valleys of that watery landscape. Then, suddenly, the mountain sank moaning beneath our keel, we ourselves descended, almost vertically, to the bottom of a gorge where we could see nothing but more waves ready to engulf us, although, quite the contrary, as if they were at the orders of our old pilot, they only took us again on their quivering shoulders and bore us up to heaven.

Two or three hours were passed in contemplating this magnificence; searching always for the shores of Sicily, which we knew we must be approaching since we were leaving behind us Lipari, the ancient Meligunis, and Stromboli, the ancient Strongyle. But before us lay a vast veil of mist, as if all the vapour driven by the mistral had solidified there to hide from us the coasts of the ancient Trinacria. We asked the pilot if he was navigating us toward the shores of an invisible island, and if there was no hope that soon the veil which hid the goddess would fall. Nunzio turned to the west, extended his hand above his head, and turned back to us, saying:

“Are you hungry?”

“Yes, indeed,” we answered with one voice.

“Well, then! breakfast; and I’ll promise you Sicily for your dessert.”

"Wind of Sardinia?" asked Arena.

"Yes, captain," replied Nunzio. "We shall be off Messina two hours after the Ave Maria."

"Is that certain?" I asked.

"As sure as the Gospel," said Pietro, who was laying the table; "the old man has said it."

On that day there was no chance of fishing. So they wrung the necks of two or three chickens, served us a dozen eggs, brought up two bottles of Bordeaux wine, and we invited the captain to take breakfast with us. When I say that Pietro laid the table I speak metaphorically. The table was scarcely set up before it was knocked down, and we were forced to eat standing, braced against some support, while Pietro and Giovanni held the dishes. The rest of the crew, inspired by our example, began to do likewise; excepting old Nunzio, who, forever at his tiller, seemed insensible to hunger, thirst, or weariness.

"Tell me, captain," I asked, "is there any danger now in sending a bottle of wine to the pilot?"

"Hum!" said the captain looking about him, "the sea is still heavy, a wave is easily shipped."

"But a glass, at least."

"Oh! a glass; there is no harm in that. Here!" he called to Peppino, his little son, who appeared just then, "here, take this glass and carry it up to the old man; and don't spill it, mind you."

Peppino disappeared and a moment later above the roof of the cabin we beheld the head of the old pilot who was wiping his mouth with his sleeve, while the child brought back the empty glass.

"Thank you, Eccellenza," said Nunzio. "Hum!"

hum! thank you. Does no harm that, does it, Vincenzo?"

A second head appeared. "'T was good," said Vincenzo, plucking off his cap, and he disappeared.

"What!" said I, "are there two?"

"Oh! in heavy weather they are never apart; they are old friends."

"Then a second glass?"

"A second glass, so be it; but that is the last."

Peppino carried up our second offering, and I presently saw a hand holding out to Nunzio the glass, scrupulously emptied to precisely half. Nunzio pulled off his cap, bowed to me, and drank.

"Now, Eccellenza," he said, "I think that if you will please to turn to the Sicily side it will not be long before you see something."

Sure enough, we began to feel puffs of wind coming from the direction of Sardinia, by which we profited, shaking out our little lateen sail upon the foremast. At the very first breath of that wind, the mists that lay upon the sea rose like smoke from a hearth disclosing gradually the coasts of Sicily and the mountains of Calabria, which at first sight seemed, from Cape Blanco to the Pizzo point, to be but one continent, surmounted by the mighty head of *Ætna*. The fabled land of Ovid, of Theocritus, of Virgil was at last before our eyes, and our ship, like that of *Æneas*, was pressing toward it under all sail, no longer protected by Poseidon, ancient god of the sea, but under the auspices of the Madonna, the modern Star of Sicilian sailors.

We ran in rapidly, devouring with our eyes the

circular horizon that opened before us like a vast amphitheatre. By midday we were off Pelorum, the cape so named by Hannibal after his pilot. The African general, fleeing in Asia from the Romans who pursued him in Africa, when he reached this point where we now were, whence it is impossible to see the straits, believed he was treacherously cornered in a cove where his enemies could blockade and capture him. Hannibal was a man of rapid and extreme determinations. He looked at his hand; the ring that held the poison that he always carried was on his finger. Sure of thus escaping the shame of slavery, he resolved that the pilot who had betrayed him should announce his coming to Pluto, and without granting him the two hours the man asked in which to justify his pilotage, he had him cast into the sea. Two hours later he perceived his error and named with the name of his victim the promontory which, stretching far towards the hither coast, had hidden from his eyes the straits of safety, — a tardy expiation consecrated by historians, and kept in remembrance to this day.

And now, from one moment to another, all the features of the coast grew visible; villages stood out in white relief upon the verdant shores; to our left we began to see ancient Scylla, that monster with the breast of a woman surrounded from the waist down by savage dogs, so dreaded by Greek sailors, which Æneas was entreated by Helenus to flee. I asked the captain if he could not check the rapidity of our course so as to give me time to recognize, map in hand, those towns and localities with sonorous and

poetic names. My demand chimed in with his desires. Our speronara, too proud and too coquettish to enter the harbour of Messina all buffeted as she was by the storm, needed herself to pause for a time while her broken antennæ were adjusted and new sails were bent. So we lay-to for awhile that the sailors might do the work more easily. I took my book and made notes; Jadin took his block and made sketches of the coast. Two or three rapid and busy hours were thus passed. Then, all having finished their work, we steered for Messina, and the little vessel flew through the sea with the rapidity of a bird seeking her nest.

As we approached Messina I remembered the pilot's prophecy that two hours after the Ave Maria we should reach our destination. That reminded me that since our departure I had never seen any of our sailors performing openly the duties of religion which these children of the sea consider so sacred. More than that: a little cross of olive-wood inlaid with mother-of-pearl, like those that are made by the monks of the Holy Sepulchre, which pilgrims bring back from Jerusalem, had disappeared from our cabin, and I found it on the prow of the schooner, above a figure of the Madonna di Pie di Grotta, under whose invocation our little vessel was placed. After inquiring whether there was any particular reason for this change of place and being told there was none, I took the cross back to the cabin, and we have seen how the Madonna, grateful no doubt, protected us in the hour of danger.

"Captain," I said, as Arena stood near me, "I

think on all Neapolitan, Genoese, and Sicilian vessels the sailors make common prayer at the hour of the Ave Maria ; is it not your custom on board the speronara ? ”

“ It is, Eccellenza, it is,” replied the captain eagerly, “ and if I must tell the truth, it troubles us greatly not to do it.”

“ What the devil hinders you ? ”

“ Excuse me,” said the captain, “ but, as we often take Englishmen who are Protestants, Greeks who are schismatics, and Frenchmen who are nothing at all, we are afraid of wounding the belief or exciting the unbelief of our passengers by the sight of religious practices that are not their own. But if passengers authorize us to act in a Christian manner we are very grateful to them ; so that if you will permit — ”

“ Permit ! why, I request it of you, captain ; and if you wish to begin at once, it seems to me, as it is nearly eight o’clock — ”

The captain looked at his watch and, seeing that there was no time to spare, he said in a loud voice :

“ The Ave Maria.”

At those words every man came up through the hatchways and sprang upon deck. More than one had, doubtless, already begun mentally the angelic salutation, but each interrupted it to take his part in the general prayer. From one end of Italy to the other that prayer, offered at a solemn hour, closes the day and opens the night. That twilight moment, full of poesy everywhere, becomes at sea of infinite sanctity. The mysterious immensity of the air and the waves, the deepened sense of human weakness

compared to the omnipotent power of God, the coming darkness, during which danger, present always, will increase, all this predisposes the heart to religious emotions and to that holy confidence that lifts the soul on the wings of faith. This evening especially, the danger we had just escaped, recalled to us now and again by a swelling wave or a distant roar, inspired both the crew and ourselves to deep meditation. At the moment when we assembled thus upon the deck, night was beginning to close in from the eastward; the mountains of Calabria and the point of Cape Pelorum were losing their beautiful azure colour and melting into grayish tones that seemed to fall from the sky like a fine rain of ashes; while to the west, a little to the right of the archipelago of Lipari, where isles of fantastic shape stood out in vigorous relief on a fiery horizon, the sun, enlarged and barred with violet bands, was beginning to dip the edge of her disk in the Tyrrhenian Sea, making those sparkling and mobile waters into waves of molten gold. At this moment the pilot stood up behind the cabin, bearing in his arms the captain's son; he placed the child on his knees upon the roof and, abandoning the tiller as if the little craft were protected by the prayer, he steadied the boy where he knelt that the roll of the sea might not cause him to lose his balance. This little separate group was relieved against a golden background, like some painting of Fra Angelico or Benozzo Gozzoli; and the child, in a voice that scarcely reached us, though it rose to God, began to recite the virginal prayer, to which the sailors listened on their knees and we with bowed heads.

Those are memories for which art is unskilful, and a pen insufficient; those are scenes that no narrative can convey, no picture reproduce, because their grandeur lies wholly in the inward feeling of those who take part in them. For the reader of travels, the amateur of sea-pictures, they will be no more than a child praying, men responding, a vessel floating; but to him who has been present at such a scene it will ever be one of the grandest spectacles he ever saw, one of the most precious memories he ever garnered — that of weakness praying, immensity looking on, and God the Father listening.

The prayer ended, each man returned to his work. We were nearing the straits; after facing Scylla we were now to confront Charybdis. Its beacon was lighted as the sun went down, and we saw, minute by minute, the other beacons of Solano, Scylla, and San Giovanni break out like stars. The wind, as mariners are wont to say, had followed the sun and was now as favourable as possible, so that by nine o'clock we were doubling the lighthouse and entering the straits. Half an hour later, just as old Nunzio had predicted, we were safely past Charybdis and the little speronara was casting anchor before the village of Della Pace.

It was too late then to get pratique, and we could not land without fulfilling that formality. Fear of cholera had made the coast inspection very active; there was risk of nothing less than being hanged in case of infraction, so that, lying not fifty feet from their families, nearly all of whom lived at Della Pace, our sailors were unable, after two months' absence,

to even kiss their wives and children. Nevertheless, the sight of their native shore, our safe arrival in spite of the burrasca, the pleasure promised for the morrow chased off vexation and soon the naïve hearts of those brave fellows opened wide to all the joyous emotions of their return. Hardly was our little ship at anchor and her sails clewed up before the captain, who had stopped her just opposite to his own house and as near as possible to the shore, gave a call of inquiry. Instantly a window opened; a woman appeared; two words alone were exchanged between sea and land: "Giuseppe!" — "Maria!"

Within five minutes the village was in a state of revolution. The rumour ran that the speronara had returned, and the mothers, the daughters, the wives, and the brides came flocking to the shore armed with torches. The crew were on deck; each called, all answered; questions, answers, requests flew across and across with such rapidity that I could not understand how any one was able to distinguish what belonged to him or her from what was meant for a neighbour. Yet all was disentangled with wonderful facility, each word found the heart to which it was addressed; and as no mishap had saddened absence, the joy was universal and found expression in Pietro, who began, accompanied by Filippo's whistling, to dance the tarantella, while the girl he loved, ashore, following his example, began to frisk in answer. It was surely the most original thing in the world, this dance, performed partly on board, partly on shore, the people of the village joining in, and the whole crew, not to be left behind, dancing too, so that

(excepting Jadin and myself) the ballet became general.

“Well, Pietro,” I said, as he dropped exhausted on the deck, “here we are at last.”

“Si, signore, and at the very hour the old man said; he was not mistaken by ten minutes.”

“And we are glad?”

“A trifle. We shall see the little wife.”

III

MESSINA. TAORMINA LA BELLA

ON the morrow we awoke with the dawn; its first gleams showed us the queen of the straits, the second capital of Sicily, Messina the Noble, whose marvellous situation, with its seven gates, five squares, six fountains, twenty-eight palaces, four libraries, two theatres, harbour, and commerce, have made her, in spite of the plague of 1742 and the terrible earthquake of 1783, one of the most flourishing and graceful cities in the world. Nevertheless, from the spot whence we first saw her, that is to say twenty-five or thirty feet from the shore, opposite to the village of Della Pace, we had only a most imperfect idea of her; but as soon as we weighed anchor and approached the city from the straits, Messina in all her majesty appeared to us.

Few situations equal that of Messina, all-powerful gate of two seas through which there is no passing from one to the other without her royal good pleasure. Leaning against hill-slopes of marvellously varied shapes clothed with pomegranates, oleanders, and the prickly pear, she faces Calabria. Behind the city rises the sun, and as he mounts the horizon he colours the panorama he illumines with the most

capricious tints. To the right of the city stretches the Ionian sea, to her left the Mediterranean.

We cast anchor directly opposite to a fountain of magnificent rococo representing Neptune charming Scylla and Charybdis. In Sicily everything is still mythological; Ovid and Theocritus are regarded as new men. No sooner was the anchor down and the sails furled than we received an invitation to go at once to the custom-house, that is to say, to the police-office. My foot was on the gangway preparing to get into the boat when a lamentable cry arrested me; it was Cama the cook, whom I had completely lost sight of after his apparition in the midst of the storm; he was now beginning to come out of his torpor like a marmot in the spring. The poor lad, although he had neither eaten nor drunk since the day of our departure, was terribly bloated: his eyes had swollen to the size of eggs, and his lips to that of sausages. But in spite of the deplorable state to which he was reduced, the stillness of the vessel was bringing him, little by little, to himself, so that he could stand, or nearly so, when the boat was ready to take us ashore. Seeing that I was going without him he felt he was forgotten, and gathering all his strength he uttered the lamentable cry that made me look back. I had too much pity in my heart to abandon poor Cama in such distress, and I signed to the boatmen to take him.

Arrived at the custom-house and about to appear before the Messinian authorities, another trial awaited the poor fellow. In his hurry to leave Naples and cook for an appreciator of Rolando he had forgotten

one thing — to provide himself with a passport. I thought at first that this could easily be arranged, for when Guichard obtained from the French ambassador the passport under which I was travelling, knowing that I expected to take a servant with me, he had the passport made out for “Monsieur Guichard and servant;” then he took the paper to the Neapolitan authorities for their *visa*. There, as a measure of governmental safety, they asked the name of the said servant, and he gave the first that came into his head, so that the passport now read, “Monsieur Guichard and servant named Bajocco.” I therefore proposed to Cama to become momentarily Bajocco, which seemed to me a name that was quite as respectable as his own. To my great astonishment he refused it with indignation; never, he said, had he blushed to be called by his father’s name, and nothing would induce him to affront his family by travelling under a fictitious patronymic, especially one so eccentric as Bajocco. I insisted; he was firm. Unhappily, on touching terra firma his strength had come back to him, as it did to Antæus, and with his strength his native obstinacy. We were still in the midst of the discussion when they came to tell me that we were wanted in the *visa* office. Not very sure of the validity of my own passport I had no desire to complicate my situation with that of Cama; so, sending him to all the devils, I went in alone.

Contrary to my expectation, the scrutiny so far as I was concerned passed without hindrance; they merely observed that my passport gave no personal description of me, — a precaution taken by Guichard,

whose bodily appearance agreed but little with mine. I replied to the official very courteously that he was quite at liberty to supply that deficiency, which he did at once. When this formality, which made my passport unimpeachable, was completed to the satisfaction of both parties, he gave permission in a loud voice, to Jadin and me, to go ashore. I should have liked to wait a moment for Cama and know how he got himself out of his scrape, but as everything, haste or delay, is suspicious in the eyes of the amiable government with which we now had to do, I contented myself with commending him to the captain before I jumped with Jadin into the boat that took us at last to the quay.

We entered the town through the port gate and launched ourselves hap-hazard into the streets. Modern as the buildings are and inadequate the architects, nothing can take from the situation of Messina what it possesses of grandiose and distinctive. Two things struck me among others in the town itself: first, a gigantic stairway leading from one street to another, which seemed to me like a fragment of the ancient Babel; secondly, the strange appearance given to all the houses by iron balconies of uniform rounded shape, filled with climbing plants that hide the bars and drape the walls in long festoons that sway as the breeze floats them. Pardon me, I am forgetting a third: at the door of a guard-house I saw a corporal of gendarmerie making a dress of rose-coloured tulle with flounces. I stopped a moment before him, and so amazed was I by the skill with which he used the needle that I made inquiries

about the gallant soldier. I was told that in Messina the trade of dressmaking was, as a general thing, carried on by men; my hero was a pluralist, gendarme and women's tailor in one.

In Messina there is neither royal park nor public garden; so that every one goes in the evening to the quay of the Palazzata, commonly called the Marina, to breathe the sea-air. The port is therefore the rendezvous of the Messinian aristocracy, who drive or ride on horseback up and down from one gate to the other, a distance of about three-quarters of a mile. Perhaps if one could cross the Mediterranean at a bound and spring from the Boulevard des Italiens to the Marina of Messina one might see some marked difference in the personages who people the two promenades; but coming from Naples the transition is too slight to be felt. The only thing that gives the Marina a special air is the presence of charming abbés, gallant, coquettish, elegantly dressed, wearing gold chains like knights, and mounted on magnificent asses from Pantellaria, with genealogies like those of racers, and trappings that vied in elegance with those of the finest horses.

Reaching the hotel, we found our captain awaiting us. I asked him for news of Cama; the poor devil was in prison and clamouring for me. Unluckily, it was too late to do anything that night; the Neapolitan authorities being of all known authorities the ones it is most imprudent to disturb out of the hours that they deign to employ on the vexing of travellers. We were forced, therefore, to postpone the matter till the morrow. Besides which, I had at

the moment a more serious anxiety. Jadin, who had felt unwell all day and had left me in the middle of my ramblings through the town to find the hotel, was now really ill. I sent for the landlord and asked him for the address of the best doctor in Messina, and the captain hurried off to find him.

A quarter of an hour later, Arena returned with a worthy doctor of a sort I supposed existed no longer except in the comedies of Dorat and Marivaux, in a wig of corkscrew curls and carrying a gold-headed cane. Æsculapius at once perceived the symptoms of a cerebral fever in due form, and ordered a bleeding. I sent for linen and a basin, and seeing that he rose to withdraw, I asked him to perform the operation himself; but he answered, with an air of great majesty, that he was a physician, not a barber, and that I must send for a *bleeder* to carry out his prescription. Happy land, where there still are Figaros off the stage!

I was not long in finding what I wanted. In addition to the two shaving-dishes hung outside their doors and the *consilio manumque* intended for the guidance of Count Almaviva, the Messinese fraternity had a special sign of their own, representing a man bleeding from all four limbs, the blood gushing symmetrically into a huge basin, the man himself fainting into a chair behind him. This prospectus was not attractive; and if Jadin himself had been in search of the honourable skilled workman his condition needed, I doubt whether he would have given preference to this one; but as I was resolved to let him be bled from one limb only, I believed he would

escape with one quarter of the syncope. All went well; the bleeding did good; although Jadin during the night began to wander and by morning was delirious. The doctor returned at the hour agreed upon; said the patient was doing well, ordered a second bleeding and an application of iced towels to the head. The day passed without my seeing clearly which of the two, patient or fever, would win the fight. I was horribly anxious. Besides my real affection for Jadin, I should have to reproach myself, if harm happened to him, for having enticed him into this journey. I awaited the morrow with great impatience.

The doctor had ordered that the patient be exposed to all the winds that blew; doors and windows were to be opened and I was to keep him as much as possible in currents of air. Strange as this prescription seemed, I obeyed it day and night religiously. But to my great astonishment the darkness, instead of bringing a gentle breeze, soft breathing of the night, cooler near the sea than it is elsewhere, blew in upon us a parching, burning wind that seemed like the vapour of an oven. I counted on the morrow; the morrow brought no change in the state of the atmosphere.

The night had cruelly tired my poor patient; but the cerebral excitement seemed to me to have lessened somewhat and given place to increasing weakness. I rang for more lemonade, the only drink the doctor ordered; no one answered. I rang a second, then a third time; at last, seeing that the mountain would not come to me, I resolved to go to the moun-

tain. I went through all the corridors and the apartments without finding a person to speak to. The master and mistress of the house had not left their chamber, although it was nine o'clock in the morning. Not a servant was at his post. It was wholly incomprehensible.

I went down to the porter and found him lying on a tattered old divan, the principal ornament of his lodge, and asked him why the house was deserted.

"Ah, signore!" he said, "don't you feel it is sirocco?"

"But suppose it is sirocco," I said, "that is no reason why no one should come when I ring."

"Oh, signore! when it is sirocco no one does anything."

"What! no one does anything? Who waits upon the travellers?"

"Ah! those days they wait upon themselves."

"That's another thing. Pardon me for disturbing you, my worthy man." The porter heaved a sigh that told me it needed great Christian charity to grant the pardon I asked.

Then I went in search of the necessary articles for the making of lemonade; I found lemons, water, and sugar as a sporting dog finds game. No one guided me or hindered me in my quest. The house seemed literally abandoned, and I reflected that a band of robbers who could rise superior to sirocco might do an excellent business in Messina.

The hour for the doctor's visit arrived, and the doctor came not. I presumed that he, too, had sirocco, but as Jadin's condition was far from being

visibly reassuring I resolved to go and rouse my *Æsculapius* in his home and bring him, willy nilly, to his patient. I remembered the address given to the captain; and taking my hat I set forth bravely. In passing along the corridor, I noticed a thermometer; it marked 30 degrees [Réaumur] in the shade.

Messina wore the appearance of a dead city; not an inhabitant moved in the streets, not a head appeared at the windows. Her beggars (and whoso has not seen a Sicilian beggar knows nothing of poverty), — her beggars themselves were lying in the street corners, panting, without strength to raise their hand, without voice to ask for alms. Pompeii, which I visited three months later, was not more silent, more solitary, more lifeless.

I reached the doctor's house. I rang; I knocked; no one answered. I applied my hand to the door; it was ajar. I entered, and began my search for the doctor. I passed through several rooms; women were lying on the sofas, children lay extended on the floor. No one raised a head to look at me. At last I came to a room with its door half open. I entered and saw my man at full length upon his bed.

I went to him, took his hand, felt his pulse.

"Ah!" he said, sadly, turning his head with difficulty towards me: "You here — what do you want?"

"*Pardieu!* what do I want? I want you to come and see my friend, who seems to me no better."

"Go and see your friend!" replied the doctor, with a gesture of horror, "but that is impossible."

“Impossible!”

He made a desperate movement, took his cane in his left hand, and slid it through his right hand from the golden knob at one end to the pointed ferrule at the other. “See,” he said, “my cane sweats.”

And drops of water did actually fall from it, so terrible is the action of this wind, even on inanimate things.

“Well! what does that prove?” I asked.

“It proves that in weather like this there are no longer doctors, — nothing but patients.”

I saw that I could never induce him to come to the hotel; and that if I asked too much I should get nothing. I therefore reduced myself to a report of the case; I explained the changes in the patient’s condition, and told how the fever had departed, giving place to exhaustion. As I went on explaining the symptoms the doctor merely said now and then: “He is doing well — he is doing well — he is doing very well — lemonade — a great deal of lemonade — lemonade as much as he likes — I will answer for him.” Then, exhausted by this effort, *Æsculapius* made me a sign that it was useless to torment him any longer, and turned his nose to the wall.

“Well?” said Jadin, when I returned, “is n’t the doctor coming?”

“My dear fellow, he declares that he is more ill than you, and that you had better go and take care of him.”

“What is the matter with him, — the plague?”

“Worse than that — sirocco.”

After all, the doctor was right ; I saw myself that the patient was visibly better. As the thing had been prescribed, he spent his whole day in drinking lemonade ; and by night even his headache had disappeared. The next day, except for weakness, he was almost well. I left him to settle his account with the doctor, and started on foot to make a little excursion to the village of Della Pace, the home of our sailors, which stands about four miles north of Palermo.

I found the road to the village charming ; it skirts on one side the mountain, on the other the sea. It was *festa*. The relics of Saint Nicholas were to be carried in procession, I don't know why or wherefore, but procession there was to be, to the great joy of the populations. As I passed before the church of the Jesuits, which stands about a mile from Della Pace, I entered it. Mass was being said. I approached the chapel and there I saw all our sailors on their knees, the captain at their head. It was a mass promised during the storm, and they were keeping their promise with a punctuality that would have been very meritorious in dwellers ashore. I waited in a corner until divine service was over : then, when the priest had said the *Ite, missa est*, I came out from behind a column and greeted our men.

There was no mistaking the way in which they received me : each face passed suddenly from an expression of pious meditation to one of joy ; my two hands were instantly seized and kissed and re-kissed, whether I would or no. Then I was presented to their wives and daughters, more especially to the

wife of the captain. They were more or less pretty, but nearly all of them had beautiful eyes, those Sicilian eyes, black and velvety, such as I have seen nowhere except at Arles and in Sicily, where they have in all probability — both for Arles and for Sicily — a common origin : Arabia.

I arrived at the right moment : the captain was just about to start for Messina to fetch me. He wanted me to come to La Pace and see the fête. We went to his home ; he lived in a pretty little house, full of comfort and cleanliness. I noticed, after a while, that he was holding high conference with his wife, and I guessed that its topic related to me. It was, in fact, nothing less than to ask me to breakfast ; but neither the one nor the other ventured to say the word. I relieved their embarrassment by inviting myself. Instantly there was revolution. Master Peppino was sent to bring the pilot, Giovanni, and Pietro. The pilot was to breakfast with us ; it was I who requested this ; Giovanni was to cook, and Pietro to wait. Maria ran to the garden for fruit ; the captain descended to the village to buy fish ; and I was left sole master and guardian of the house. As I presumed that all these preparations would take, at the least, half an hour or three quarters, and that my presence would only embarrass these worthy people, I resolved to put the time to use by making a little excursion above the village. The captain's house backed on the mountain and a little path led from the back door directly upon it. I took this path, and began to climb the acclivity through cacti, pomegranates, and oleanders.

In proportion as I went up, the landscape, when I gazed back, with Messina to right and Pelorum to left, broadened before me ; while to the eastward lay, like a curtain all mottled with villages, plains, forests, and foothills, that long chain of the Apennines, which rises behind Nice, traverses all Italy, and sinks away at Reggio. Little by little I overlooked Messina, then the Promontory, until at last, beyond the city, I beheld, like a vast sheet of silver lying in the sunshine, the Ionian Sea, and beyond Pelorum, rolling out like a vast blue *moiré* ribbon, the tideless Mediterranean. At my feet were the Straits, which I now could see from end to end, their current as visible as a river, and showing to the eye the whirlpools of Charybdis, so dreaded by the ancients, which Homer, in the *Odyssey*, places opposite to Scylla, though they are in point of fact at a distance of thirteen miles.

I seated myself in the shade of a glorious chestnut tree with the singular sensations of a man who finds himself at last in a land he has long desired to roam and doubts if he is really there ; he asks himself whether the capes, the villages, the mountains which he has before his eyes are truly those of which he has read so much ; can it be that to them belong those poetic, sonorous, harmonious names to which in his childhood he was rocked by Greek and Latin — those two nurses of the mind, if not of the soul ?

Yes, it was really I, and I was in Sicily ; I was seeing the same places that Ulysses and Æneas saw, and Homer and Virgil sang. That picturesque little village over there near to a high rock and crowned by

a fortress is the Scylla that so terrified Anchises. This sea, boiling at my feet, which so many centuries have not quite calmed, is the veil that hid the implacable Charybdis. It was here that Frederick the Second, grandson of Barbarossa, flung the golden cup which Colas il Pesce, the hero of Schiller's ballad, plunged three times vainly into the vortex to recover. And behind me I was leaning, as it were, against Ætna, the fabulous and gigantic Ætna, which touches heaven with her head, flings stones of fire to the stars, and makes Trinacria tremble when the giant buried in her bosom turns on his side. Only, Ætna, like Charybdis, is now very quiet, a slender vapour alone shows that the sleeping giant breathes, and gives warning in time that he is not dead.

I had reached this point in my reverie when I saw the captain at the window of his cottage making signs to me that all was ready; and I went down rapidly. My good captain had spent himself on hospitality, and Giovanni had done marvels. Especially was there a dish of fish which seemed to me a masterpiece. I asked the name of his finny excellence; I knew it not, and it seemed to me worthy of public knowledge. I was told I had to do with a *pesce spada*. I then remembered having read in my youth very interesting accounts of how the swordfish, using the terrible weapon with which Nature has armed the end of its nose, will attack a whale; leaping into the air and letting itself fall head foremost and so transfixing the cetacean with its sword, which is usually four or five feet long. But there the information of the naturalist ceased. I had been satisfied



to value the swordfish solely for its aptitude in fencing, but I now saw that M. de Buffon had done him injustice. He possesses, as fish, qualities hitherto unknown, but not less estimable than those his historian seeks to palliate, and he deserves to obtain in the "Cuisinière bourgeoise" a necrological article as important as the biographical article he now possesses in Natural History.

The dessert was not less remarkable than the breakfast. It was composed of pomegranates, magnificent oranges, and a fruit as little known to me as the fish about which I had just gathered such precious information. It is called the *figue d'Inde* [the prickly pear], that perpetual manna which Sicily offers so freely to the gluttony of the rich and the poverty of the poor. As soon as one leaves the gates of a city, masses of these enormous cacti, laden with their fruit, rise up on all sides. The Indian fig is about the size of a hen's egg, wrapped in a green pulp, and protected by little bunches of prickles, a wound from which will cause a long and painful sore. Consequently, a certain amount of study is required to disembowel the fruit without accident. That operation over, there issues from the gash a globe of yellowish flesh, sweet, cool and melting; we began, at first, by tasting it with a certain reserve, but by the end of a week we had made it a necessity. The Sicilians adore this fruit, which is to them what the watermelon is to the Neapolitans, with this difference, that the watermelon needs a certain culture and cannot be had gratuitously; whereas the Indian fig grows everywhere, in the sand, in gardens, in marshes, among

rocks, and even in the clefts of the walls, and costs nothing except the trouble of gathering it.

Breakfast over the captain proposed to me to go and see the *fiesta* of the relics of Saint Nicholas. It can well be imagined that I did not refuse the proposal. We started by going up the road that led to the lighthouse, but presently we turned off upon rolling land that hid the sea from sight, and came, after awhile, to the shore of a little, isolated blue, clear lake, brilliant as a mirror, surrounded on the left by a row of houses, on the right by a line of hills which prevent the pretty cup from emptying itself into the straits. This is the lake of Pantana. Its banks now presented the sight of a *fête champêtre* reduced to its most naïve simplicity, with games impossible to win, little stalls laden down with fruit, and the tarantella.

It was there that I was able for the first time to examine that dance in all its details. It is a marvellous dance, and the most adaptable that I know of, provided there is a musician, or that the dancers can sing or whistle the air themselves. It is danced alone, or in twos, fours, eights, and so on indefinitely, if desired; man with man, woman with woman, those who know each other and those who do not; external circumstances have nothing to do with it, nothing disturbs the dancers. When one of the spectators desires to join he leaves the circle surrounding the space reserved for the dance, jumps alternately first on one foot then on the other until some other person detaches himself or herself from the dance and jumps in like manner in front of him. If this partner delays

and the monotony of his jump wearies the actor, he approaches some couple who have danced for some time, nudges the elbow of the man or the woman who has danced the longest, sends that person to rest and takes the vacant place, gallantry not causing him to make any selection as to sex. It must be said that the Sicilians fully appreciate the advantages of this independent jig; the tarantella is an absolute malady among them. I had hardly arrived at the shores of the lake with the captain, his wife, Nunzio, Giovanni, Pietro, and Peppino, before I found myself absolutely alone, and free to make all the reflections I wanted to make. The whole party were dancing in rivalry with one another, and there was not one of them, down to the captain's son, who was not jigging away in front of a species of giant who showed no other difference from the Cyclops, from whom he seemed to descend in a straight line, than that of possessing a pair of eyes, which, as we know, the other did not.

As for the music that set the population a-jigging, it was not, as with us, stationary at a certain point, but disseminated around the shores of the lake, this perambulating orchestra consisted generally of two musicians, one played the flute, the other a species of mandolin. The two instruments united created a melody which with us has the exclusive privilege of making bears and puppies dance. I counted sixty-six of these musicians, and they all, more or less, had as much as they could do.

At the height of the *festa* the shrine of Saint Nicholas was brought out of the church where it was

kept. Instantly the dances ceased; every one ran to take his or her place in the escort, and the procession began to make the tour of the lake, accompanied by the ceaseless explosion of quantities of little pop-guns. This new exercise lasted about an hour and a half; then the shrine re-entered the church with the priests, and the crowd scattered itself again around the lake. As it was late and I had seen as much of the fête as I wished to see, I took leave of the captain, who made a sign to Pietro and Giovanni. Instantly abandoning their partners in the dance without saying a word to excuse themselves, the good fellows flew to take me round by sea in the boat of the speronara in order to spare me the six miles' walk to Messina. I tried to refuse, but it was quite impossible; Giovanni made so many entreaties and Pietro so many capers, and both set so high a value on the honour of taking back His Excellency, that His Excellency, who in the depths of his heart was glad enough to lie in a good boat instead of plodding back on legs that were tired with carrying him in a heat of 35 degrees Réamur from eight in the morning till five at night, ended by accepting, promising himself, it is true, to make up to the friendly pair for the pleasure they lost. So we all three went down chattering to Della Pace; they hat in hand, and I vainly endeavouring the whole way to make them put their hats on their heads. Reaching the captain's door, they untied the boat, into which I jumped, and the tide serving, we began, without great fatigue to the honest fellows, the row to Messina.

I found Jadin as well as I could reasonably expect; he had sent away the doctor, giving him three piastres and calling him an old scamp. As the latter did not speak French and could understand only that part of the harangue that was made visible, he took leave of Jadin by kissing his hands.

I now ordered horses to be put to a species of vehicle which the landlord had the audacity to palm off upon me as a calèche, and we started to take a turn on the Marina. In southern climates there is a period of the twenty-four hours that is truly delicious; it is from six o'clock in the evening till two in the morning. One really lives during those hours only; contrary to the customs of our northern climate, it is at night that Italians are awake. The doors and windows of the houses are opened, the streets grow lively, the squares are filled with people. A cool breeze drives away the leaden atmosphere that has weighed all day on body and mind. Heads are raised, women resume their smiles, flowers give out their perfume, mountains take on their violet tints, the sea casts up its briny odour, and life, that seemed well-nigh extinct, revives, and flows through the veins with a strange increase of sensuous joy.

We remained two hours doing *corso* on the Marina; then we passed another hour at the theatre listening to "Norma." That reminded me of my dear and good Bellini, who gave me letters for Naples on my departure from France, and made me promise that if I went to Catania, his native place, I would go and see his old father and carry news of him. I was quite resolved to keep my promise religiously,

little dreaming that the news I should give the old man would be the last he would ever receive of his son.

The next morning at a quarter to eleven the captain arrived with his accustomed punctuality; Jadin took charge of settling with the landlord and of provisioning the vessel, by the help of Giovanni and Pietro, with fruits and wine; and I went off with the captain to pay my visit to the head of the Messinese police. We found him, contrary to custom, an amiable man of good society. He was intimate with the doctor who had treated Jadin, and had spoken of us very favourably. I related to him the story of Cama, how he had forgotten his passport in his haste to follow a worthy appreciator of Rolando, and how his refusal to change his name, which was really a proof of the integrity of his soul, had led to his arrest. The head of the police asked the captain if he would give him his word of honour that Cama should stay on board the *speronara* and not land anywhere during the rest of the voyage. I permitted myself to observe to the great authority that I had brought a cook to cook, and not as an object of luxury. I added that as he was sea-sick from the moment he set foot on the vessel he was perfectly useless to me aboard, and I had therefore counted on his services ashore by way of compensation. But in vain did I argue in my best manner; the sentence was pronounced and the judge would not rescind it. It is true that he offered me an alternative, namely: to leave Cama in prison during the journey and take him out on my return, when

he would give me a certificate, which, by stating that my cook had remained in Messina for a cause independent of my will and could only be attributed to the cook's own fault, would release me from the obligation of paying his wages. But I had pity on poor Cama. The captain pledged his word, and the chief of police gave in exchange the order for the release of the prisoner. I left the captain to take him out of prison, and, requesting him to be opposite to the Marina at three o'clock punctually, I returned to the hotel.

There I found Jadin in high discussion with the inn-keeper, who insisted on charging him for breakfasts he had never eaten, under pretext that our rooms were each two piastres a day including meals, eaten or not eaten; consequently he presented an additional reckoning of eighteen francs for lemonade, barley-water, etc. After a firm threat on our part to complain to the authorities of such robbery, it was agreed that all that Jadin had swallowed, no matter of what nature the absorption might be, should be reckoned as food. So the matter ended in his lemonade and slops being considered in lieu of cutlets and beefsteak; on which the landlord let us off, and begged us to recommend him to our friends.

At three o'clock Pietro and Giovanni, who had constituted themselves our servants, came to fetch our trunks. The wind was fair and the speronara was awaiting us to set sail at once. The first person I saw on board was Cama. Prison had done him a world of good; his eyes and lips were their natural size, so that he now looked more like a human being.

Moreover, his incarceration had made him tractable, and he was ready now to take any name I chose to give him. Unfortunately, this patronymical abnegation came too late.

But with his health Cama laid claim to his culinary rights. He had dressed himself in his very best clothes to awe whosoever might attempt to usurp his functions. He wore a blue linen cap, blue jacket, nankeen trousers, a kitchen apron coquet-tishly caught up at one corner, and he rested his left hand proudly on the handle of a knife passed through his belt. Giovanni had neither linen cap, nor blue jacket, nor nankeen trousers, nor a festooned apron, nor a kitchen knife stuck coquettishly into his belt; but he had antecedents, respectable antecedents, and among them was the breakfast he had cooked for me the day before at the captain's house. Neither did he seem at all disposed to make the slightest concession. He had, moreover, a powerful auxiliary, in the person of Milord, who until now had recognized him as the rightful distributor of bones and scraps, and was fully prepared to support those rights. I saw that the matter was gradually becoming unpleasant, so, not wishing to vex either of these good fellows, I called up the captain, told him that we would not dine for a couple of hours, and, as the wind was fair, I begged him to sail at once. Immediately all the men were called to work the ship, Giovanni among them. As for Cama, he descended triumphantly to the culinary regions.

A quarter of an hour later, Giovanni, descending in his turn, found his rival lying at full length among

his pots and pans. That which I foresaw had happened. Sea-sickness had produced its effect. Cama claimed no more than a mattress and permission to be on deck. The fussiness of the chief of police had provided him with a very easy voyage. Giovanni triumphed without ostentation. Dinner was ready at the hour I had named and proved to be excellent. The captain shared it, and it was agreed, once for all, that he should do so daily. At dessert I noticed that Master Peppino did not appear, and I asked for him. I was then told that his mother had kept him at home. Gaetano also, seized with a sort of ophthalmia, had remained ashore.

During dinner the captain told us about the storm. Not without good reason had his wife been terrified for son and husband; six vessels had been lost during the eighteen hours the tempest lasted.

Until night we kept to the middle of the Straits, at about equal distance from the coast of Sicily and the coast of Calabria. On both sides luxurious vegetation seemed to bathe its very roots in the sea. We passed thus before Contessi, Reggio, Pistorera, Sant' Agata, until, through the twilight mists we saw the lovely village of La Scaletta. Then night fell, one of those delicious, limpid, fragrant nights, of which a man has no conception if he has never left the North. We dragged our mattresses to the deck, threw ourselves upon them and were soon asleep, rocked by the motion of the waves and the song of our mariners. When we opened our eyes it was four in the morning and we were lying at anchor off Giardini, the port of the ancient Tauromenium,

where Heracles, holding the horn of his strongest ox, landed from Rhegium and stabled his herd, in the days of old.

The aspect of Taormina threw us into ecstasy. To our left, adorning the horizon, rose *Ætna*, that pillar of heaven, as Pindar calls it, defining its violet masses in a ruddy atmosphere permeated with the rays of the rising sun. Nearer to us, crouching at the feet of the giant, were two tawny foothills looking as though they were covered by some huge lion's skin; while before us, in the curve of the little bay, were a few poor fishing-houses at the edge of the sea that was now like a mirror of burnished steel. Above its port, rose, to the right, the ancient Naxian town of Tauromenium. The town itself is commanded by a mountain, Monte Venere, and by a peak on the apex of which stands the Saracenic village of Mola, which can be reached only by a stone ladder-way.

When we had well considered this scene, so magnificent, so splendid that Jadin never once thought of sketching it, we turned towards the east. The sun had risen majestically and was kindling the summits of the Calabrian mountains, while their western slopes still lay in semi-tones and tints in which we could distinguish valleys and ravines by their darker shades, and villages and towns by their whiteness. As the sun rose higher in the heavens all changed colour, houses and mountains; the burnished sea grew dazzling, and when again we turned, that first scene, too, had lost its weird, fantastic tints: *Ætna* had returned to her puissant and majestic reality.

We landed, and after a rapid climb of half an hour by a narrow, stony path, we reached the walls of the town, built of black lava, yellow stone, and reddish brick. Though the first aspect of the town looks Moorish, the pointed arch of the gate is Norman. We entered and found ourselves in a narrow, dirty street, leading to a square, in the centre of which was a fountain surmounted by a singular statue—the head and shoulders of an angel of the 14th century grafted upon the body of an antique bull. The angel is of white marble, the bull of red granite. The angel holds in her left hand a globe to which is affixed a cross, in the other hand a sceptre. A church, standing opposite, has two remarkable decorations; first, the six marble columns that support it; and next, two Gothic lions, couchant at the foot of the baptismal font, and bearing the arms of the town, namely, a female centaur. This last sculpture seems to explain the one in the square.

The Greek theatre is the point to which the feet of travellers tend along the sunny street. It was hewn in the rock, semicircular in shape, of a size to hold twenty-five thousand persons. It is now a ruin, a ruin peopled with memories; but the traveller who comes to visit it is wont, when there, to look more at the vast panorama unrolling before him than at the crumbling *cunei*, or at the well-preserved stage, disfigured on one side by Roman brick. There, to the right, is *Ætna*, developed in all the immensity of her base, which is well-nigh two hundred miles in circumference, and in the majesty of her height, which is 10,600 feet; 2000 less than Mt.

Blanc, 6000 more than Vesuvius. To the left, the chain of the Apennines trends down behind Reggio, and, like a kneeling bull, protrudes its head and presents its horns to the sea, which breaks and foams against the Cape Dell' Armi. On the horizon, heaven and earth are blending, and far away stretches the shore to the right, all strewn with sites and cities that bear the names of Naxos, Aci-Reale, home of Acis and Galatea, the Cyclope isles, Catania, the Læstrygonian fields, that granary of Sicily, Megara Hyblæa, home of bees and honey, and lastly, before the coast turns southward to Cape Passero, Siracusa, more Greek in living memories than Greece itself.

Nature's instruction for an artist can no farther go than at Taormina; yet he knows not whether what he feels is exquisite pleasure or unspeakable pain. That which he sees, he can never represent by his art; true, it permeates his soul and thence his art, although no pen, or brush, or voice can portray it. There are two brief moments at Taormina that will never be forgotten by one who has known them: at evening, when the sun is setting behind *Ætna*, and the shadow of the great mountain is cast upon the Calabrian hills, the forests and uplands glowing with purples melting into blues and violets into crimsons, on which the slow-rising column from the crater is defined as clearly as it is upon the sky behind it. Seen from the upper *præcinctio* of the temple, with one's feet among the *acanthus* and *iris* and *cyclamen* and the rosy Sicilian thrift, there is no wealth of rich colour to compare with it.

And again: before dawn, watch the calm, white bosom of the mountain, with its tracery of blue veins, until the sun, rising from the waters of the Ionian sea, touches the cone of the crater for one brief instant with a rosy glow and makes you think it is the nipple of the breast of the world.

These magnificent sights blunted, I must confess, our curiosity for other things. Still, as a matter of conscience, I visited the Naumachia, the piscines, the baths, the temple of Apollo, and the remarkable Roman aqueduct still flowing brightly along its mossy way. But early the next morning we were glad to quit the squalid den they called an inn, and descending the precipitous path, half slipping, half rolling, and beckoning to the captain, whom we saw on deck, to send a boat, we were soon on board.

Decidedly, Giovanni was a great man. He knew that after an excursion into those regions we could not fail to be hungry. In consequence, he set to work, and soon our breakfast was ready for us.

Travellers who journey in Sicily! in heaven's name take a *speronara*. With a *speronara*, above all with that, if possible, of my friend Captain Arena, you can eat (if you are not actually sea-sick); in the inns you can never eat. And let this be taken literally: in Sicily there is nothing to eat but what you carry with you; it is not the publicans who feed the traveller, but the traveller who feeds the publicans.¹

¹ This is not so now. There is a charming little inn at Taormina, close to the Greek theatre (unless modern improvements have spoilt it) where good food, plenty of fruit, and cleanliness will help to make a stay of weeks unspeakably delightful. — Tr.

IV

CATANIA. SAN NICOLA IL VECCHIO

WHILE the captain was ashore getting his permit to sail we made an excellent breakfast. By midday he returned and at once we weighed anchor. A pretty wind enabled us to make six miles an hour, so that by three o'clock, or thereabouts, we were off the heights of Aci-Reale, where I had told the captain I wished to land. Consequently, he steered for a species of little creek, whence a zigzag path led up to the town, which looks down upon the sea from a height of some three or four hundred feet.

This meant a new permit to get, and the delay of an hour to endure; after which we were authorized to enter the town. Jadin followed me with confidence, not knowing what I was going to do there.

Aci appeared to be a rather fine and symmetrically built place. Its walls gave it a formidable little air, of which it seemed to be proud. But I had not come to see walls and houses; I was in search of something better; I was seeking the son of Poseidon and Thusa. As I felt sure he would not come to meet me, I determined to address a gentleman who was walking on the opposite side of the street. I went towards him, and seeing that I was a foreigner he stopped, thinking that I wanted information.

"Monsieur," I said, "may I without indiscretion ask you the way to the grotto of Polyphemus?"

"The way to the grotto of Polyphemus? Ho! ho!" said the gentleman, looking at me, — "the way to the grotto of Polyphemus?"

"Yes, monsieur."

"You are mistaken, monsieur, by nearly a mile. It is beyond here, going towards Catania. You will recognize its port by four rocks which advance into the sea and which Virgil calls *cyclopea saxa*, and Pliny calls *scopuli cyclopum*. You must land in the port of Ulysses; then if you advance in a straight line, turning your back to the sea, you will find, between the village of Aci-San-Filippo and that of Nizetti, the grotto of Polyphemus."

The gentleman bowed to me and continued his way.

"Well! there's a man who seems to possess his cyclops pretty well," said Jadin; "his directions are clear."

"Therefore, unless you have something particular to do here, we will return on board, if you like."

"Learn, my dear fellow," said Jadin, "that I never have anything to do in 40 degrees of heat, that I have come solely to follow you, and that, henceforth, when you are not more certain of your friends' address I will thank you to leave me on board, me and Milord. Isn't that so, Milord?"

Milord lolled out a tongue half a foot long and red as fire, — a grimace, joined to the active manner in which he began to pant, that showed me he was precisely of his master's opinion.

We returned to the shore and re-embarked. At the end of half an hour I saw, beyond a doubt, the four cyclopean rocks, the spot indicated. I asked the captain if the little roadstead that I saw was really the Porto Ulissi. He answered yes. We therefore cast anchor precisely where Æneas did the same thing. Such is the power of genius that after the lapse of three thousand years, this port has preserved the name given to it by Homer, and here, to the peasants, the history of Ulysses and his companions, perpetuated as a tradition, not only across the centuries, but also across the many successive rulers of Sicily — Siccans, Spaniards, Carthagenians, Romans, Greek emperors, Goths, Saracens, Normans, Angevins, Aragonese, Austrians, Bourbons of France, and Ducs de Savoie — seems as living as the most national traditions of the middle ages are to us.

Thus the first child from whom I asked my way to the grotto of Polyphemus ran before me instantly to show it. As for Jadin, instead of following me, he threw himself gallantly into the sea, on a pretext of looking for Galatea. Yes, it can all be found; with proportions less gigantic, perhaps, than in the poesy of Homer, Virgil and Ovid, but the grotto of Polyphemus and of Galatea is still there after thirty centuries; the rock that crushed Acis is there, covered and protected by a Norman fortress that took his name. Acis was changed, it is true, into a river called to-day the Aqua-grande, for which I searched in vain; they showed me his bed, which came to the same thing. I supposed he had gone to sleep else-

where; with the thermometer at 50 degrees of heat one ought not to be too severe on the morality of rivers.

I looked also for the forest from which Æneas saw the unfortunate Achemenides, forgotten by Ulysses, emerging, whom he welcomed himself, although a Greek; but the forest has disappeared, or nearly so.

Night was beginning to fall; the sun that I had seen rising from the Ionian sea was disappearing, little by little, behind Ætna. A gun fired on board the speronara was evidently intended to remind me that after a certain hour I could not embark. As I did not care to sleep in a grotto, even that of Galatea — for I was too little like her handsome shepherd to deceive her — I made my way back to the speronara. I found Jadin furious. The dinner was spoilt; and he assured me that if I continued to keep such bad company as cyclops, nereids and swains he would leave me and go his own way.

The next morning our awakening was far from picturesque; the beauties of Taormina were left behind; I fancied I was before a church draped for a funeral. We were in the harbour of Catania.

Catania stands like an island between two rivers of black lava. The most ancient of these, that on her right, came down in 1381; the other, which presses on her left, is of 1669. Checked by the sea, which at first it drove back two-thirds of a mile, the lava ended by chilling and stiffening into a monstrous cliff full of fantastic and gloomy excavations, like so many gates of hell, which are peopled, in whimsical contrast by white doves and swallows. As for the

port, its bottom is half-filled with the coal-black lava, so that none but small vessels can enter it.

While the captain had gone for pratique we jumped into a boat, gun in hand, and made an excursion among these caves, which resulted in the death of several pigeons destined to serve as a roast at dinner. The captain returned with permission to land, by which we profited instantly, for I was resolved to employ the next day and the day after in climbing *Ætna*, which, in the opinion of the people of the region themselves, is no light matter. Ten minutes later we were at the *Corona d' Oro*, kept by Signor Abbate, whom I name out of gratitude; because, against all precedents, we found something to eat in his hostelry.

Catania was founded, so says Thucydides, by the Chalcidians in 729, five years after Naxos; according to other authors, by the Phœnicians, at a period when the eruptions of *Ætna* were not only rare but still unknown, for Homer, in speaking of the mountain, makes no mention of its being a volcano. It was here that the Athenians landed when they dreamed of conquering that Sicily which became their tomb. Alcibiades commanded them; his reputation for beauty, gallantry, and eloquence preceding him. He arrived before Catania and asked to be allowed to enter the city alone and speak with the Catanese; if the Catanese had been men only his request might perhaps have been refused, but the women of Catania insisted on receiving him; Alcibiades was conducted to the circus, and all the city went with him. There the pupil of Socrates made one of his Ionian ha-

ranges, so gentle, so flattering, so eloquent, so terrible, so specious, so threatening. Even the guards at the gates abandoned their posts and came to listen to him. This was foreseen by Alcibiades, whose sin was not modesty, and Nicias, his lieutenant, took advantage of it to bring the Athenian fleet into the harbour, which at that time was not choked with lava, and seize the city without opposition. Then came, sixty years later, Dionysius the elder, fresh from the conquest of Syracuse, then Mamercus, then, 549 years after the foundation of the city, came the Romans, those great invaders, who began by pillaging; they sent their spoils to Rome, which was then poor Rome, the Rome of mud and thatch, so she was keenly alive to such gifts. Conquests went on and soon Rome was enriched, and then Rome began to feel generous. Marcellus determined to make the Sicilians forget the way in which Rome had treated them at first. He had a mania for building; wherever he went he built fountains, aqueducts, theatres; at Catania he built a gymnasium and probably the baths. Consequently Verres found the city so flourishing that he deigned to cast his eyes upon her. They told him of a temple to Demeter that contained a beauteous statue known only to women, for men were not allowed to enter that temple. Verres, by nature ungallant, declared that women had privileges enough without that one; so he entered the temple and took the statue, which went with his other spoils. Not long after, Sextus Pompeius pillaged Catania in his turn, on pretence that it had been too lukewarm towards his father in his quarrels with

Cæsar — in short, it was high time Augustus came when he did come.

He indeed, ah! he was the rectifier-general, the universal pacificator. In his youth, carried away by force of example, he had, it is true, proscribed a little, just to keep in line with Lepidus and Antony; but he took on age, called himself tribune of the people, and not *imperator* — so said the republicans of that day. He loved bucolics, georgics, and idylls, the songs of shepherds, the rivalry of flutes, the babbling of brooks. In short, he was the god who gave rest to the world. Catania felt the blessing of that good reign. Augustus built up her walls and sent her a colony which became the most flourishing in Sicily, even to the times of Theodosius. But after the death of the latter her tribulations began again. Greeks, Saracens, and Normans succeeded one another, and treated her much as Valerius, Verres, and Sextus Pompeius had done. Finally, and not to speak of her miseries from Goths, Saracens, and Normans, as if to crown these successive depredations, came an earthquake in 1169, which overthrew the city and left not a single house standing. Fifteen thousand persons perished. The shock over, those who escaped it returned to their ruins like birds to their nest, and, with the help of William the Good, they rebuilt the city. It was scarcely up before Henry VI., in a moment of ill-temper, set fire to it and put all the inhabitants to the sword. Luckily a few saved themselves. Those who escaped the father, conspired against the son. Frederick Barbarossa was a chip of the old block; he reburned the city and again put

the people to the sword. After Henry and Frederick nothing could be worse than the plague, so that came in 1348, and depopulated Catania. Little by little, in the course of centuries, the ill-fated city recovered from these successive scourges, the first Sicilian university was established, and she bore the palm of being the literary centre of the island, when, in 1669, a flood of lava, thirty miles long and three miles wide, issued from Monte Rosso, came down upon her, covering three villages on its way, sapping her foundations and pushing her into her port, which it choked and rendered worthless forever.

Now there is the history of Catania for twenty-six centuries; and yet that obstinate town has sprung up again in the same spot, each time driving its stone roots deeper and deeper into that unstable and treacherous soil. More than that: Catania is, barring Messina, the richest city in Sicily.

As soon as breakfast was over, we set out to see the town. Our guide took us direct to its two squares. I have observed that guides always take you at once to the squares. For this I am very much obliged to them, because, once seen, we are rid of them. The squares of Catania are, like the squares of all other cities, great empty spaces surrounded by houses; the larger the space, the finer the square; that is agreed to in all parts of the world. One of the squares in Catania is surrounded by insignificant buildings; I do not know what such constructions are; they are not houses, they are not public buildings; the people call them palaces—much good may that do them! The other square is rather more picturesque; that

is, it is a little more irregular. In the centre rises a marble fountain, surmounted by an elephant in lava, bearing on his back an obelisk of granite. Is that obelisk, or is it not, Egyptian? That is the grave question that rends apart the archæologists of Sicily. Such as it is, Egyptian or not, one thing is certain, it served as *spina* to the circus discovered in 1820.

It was in this square that I happened to ask my guide if he knew the Signore Bellini's father. At this inquiry he turned quickly round and, pointing to an old gentleman who was driving past in a little carriage with one horse, he said: "There he is now, going into the country."

I ran after the carriage and stopped it, thinking that one never takes a liberty in speaking to a father of his son, and a son like this one especially. At the first words I said to him the old man took me by both hands and asked if I really knew his son. I took from my portfolio a letter of introduction which Bellini had given me, just as I left Paris, for the Duchesse de Noja, and I asked him if he knew the handwriting. The poor father answered only by taking it in his hands and kissing it; then, turning to me, he said:

"Oh! you do not know how good he is to me! We are not rich; well, after every success, comes a little souvenir, and each souvenir is chosen so as to give me a little comfort and pleasure in my old age. If you will come home with me I will show you a quantity of things I owe to his filial piety. Each one of his successes crosses the sea and brings me some new comfort. This watch, *that* came from

‘Norma;’ this horse and carriage are a part of the profits of the ‘Puritani.’ In every letter he writes he always says he is coming; but it is so far from Paris to Catania that I can’t believe in that promise, and I fear I shall die without seeing him. But you will see him — you!”

“Yes,” I answered, for I believed I should see him again, “and if you have any commission for him —”

“No. What could I send him, I! my blessing? Poor boy! I give him that day and night. You must tell him that you gave me a happy day by speaking of him, and that I embraced you.” The old man kissed me. “But you must not tell him that I wept. Besides,” he added, smiling, “I weep for joy. Is it really true that he has a reputation, my son?”

“The highest reputation, I do assure you.”

“What a strange thing! Who could have told me that when I scolded him because, instead of working, he was always beating time with his feet and making his little sister sing our old Sicilian airs. Well, well; all is written above. But I wish I could see him again before I die. Does your friend there know him too, my son?”

“Yes.”

“Personally?”

“Yes, personally. My friend is himself the son of a distinguished musician.”

“Then call him; I should like to shake his hand also.”

I called to Jadin, who came. It was then his turn to be cherished and caressed by the poor old man,

who wanted to take us home to spend the day with him. But this was impossible; his home was in the country, and our time was mapped out. We promised to see him if we returned by way of Catania; then he pressed my hand and left us. Scarcely had he driven a few steps before he called to me.

“Your name?” he said. “I forgot to ask your name.”

I told it to him; but the name brought him no recollections. What he knew of his own child was not the artist, but the good son.

“Alexandre Dumas, Alexandre Dumas,” he repeated. “Good; I shall remember that he who bears that name brought me good news of my — Alexandre Dumas; I shall remember your name; adieu! adieu!”

Poor old man! I am sure he has not forgotten it, for the news I gave him of his son was the last he was ever to receive.

On leaving him our guide took us to the Museum, a modern institution wholly made up of antiquities. Catania has had the good luck of possessing a rich *signore* who did not know what to do with his money and was an artist to boot. This is Don Ignazio di Patarno, Prince of Biscari. He was the first to remember that he walked on another Herculaneum, and truly royal excavations were begun by a private individual. It was he who found the temple of Demeter, and brought to sight the thermes, the aqueducts, the basilica, the forum, and the sepulchres. And it was he who founded the Museum and collected and classed the objects it contains into three

classes : antiquities, products of natural history, and curiosities. Of these the Sicilian vases are, beyond a doubt, the most interesting part of the Museum, because their shapes are infinitely varied, and nearly all are perfect in elegance. As for the idols, penates, lamps, etc., they are what one sees everywhere.

From the Museum we were going towards the cathedral along the rue Saint-Ferdinand, when I called to Jadin, who was behind me.

“Hold Milord !” I said.

“Why ?”

“Hold him first ; I ’ll tell you afterwards.”

Jadin called Milord and slipped his handkerchief through his collar.

“Now,” said I, “look at the window of that optician.”

On the window sat a cat, trained to look at the passers-by through a pair of spectacles which he wore very gravely on his nose.

“The deuce !” said Jadin, “that was a good idea of yours ; that one belongs to the class of learned cats ; ’t would have cost us more than two pauls.”

Milord, in his capacity of bull-dog, was so great a strangler of cats that we had found it necessary to take measures accordingly. Consequently, after Genoa, the town in which he first began to ransack Italy for the feline race, we had debated and argued the value of a well-conditioned cat ; and it was settled with the owners of the first two strangled ones that a cat of usual race, dapple-gray, striped gray, tortoise-shell, was worth a maximum price of two pauls ; there were, of course, exceptions to this

tariff, — angoras, learned cats, cats with two heads or six paws. We had exacted a receipt in due form for the Genoese cats ; to this we added successively the subsequent receipts, so that we now possessed an indisputable title. Every time that Milord committed murder and more than two pauls was demanded of us as the value of the victim, we drew our tariff from our pocket and proved that two pauls was the price accepted for other murders ; and it was very rare that the owner did not content himself with what had satisfied the other persons. But, as I have said, there were exceptions, and a cat wearing spectacles in so majestic a manner evidently belonged to them. Jadin therefore said a sensible thing when he remarked that the cat of the optician would cost us more than two pauls, and he acted with laudable prudence in slipping his handkerchief through Milord's collar.

Thanks to that precaution we passed through the rue Saint-Ferdinand without mishap, and without Milord's appearing to perceive, except by his brief captivity, the momentary anxiety of our minds.

The church we were going to is under the protection of Sant' Agata, who is buried there, as everybody knows. Her form of martyrdom was to have her breasts torn off with red-hot pincers ; so that the saint, like Dido, knowing how to compassionate the agony she suffered, is especially miraculous for diseases of the breast. A multitude of votive offerings, in silver, marble and wax, all representing breasts, show faith in her healing power and the confidence felt by the Catanian population in the

chaste and beautiful virgin they have chosen for their patron saint.

In the choir some beautiful oak bas-reliefs dating from the 15th century represent the whole history of the saint, from the moment when she refused to marry Quintilian to that in which her body was brought back from Constantinople. The most interesting of these bas-reliefs are those representing the moment when the saint is beaten with iron rods, when her breasts are cut off, when they burn her, and when, visited in prison by Saint Peter, she is healed by him. Then comes the second period of the legend. Still following the bas-reliefs, we see the saint appear to Guibert and command him to go to Constantinople and search for her body. He obeys, and finds her tomb. Hampered by the difficulty of bringing back this precious relic, he cuts the body into pieces, puts a piece into the quiver of each of his soldiers, and thus brings her back to Catania with nothing missing but one breast, which happily is found and brought back by a little girl; so that the blessed Agata is now, to the shame and confusion of infidels, as whole as she ever was. All these bas-reliefs are charming in naïveté. No one pays any attention to them; no book speaks of them; no guide dreams of showing them; and yet they are undoubtedly one of the most interesting things in the church.

We were returning to the hotel, intending to eat a mouthful before we went to see the garden of the Benedictines, when, looking about me, I perceived that Milord had become invisible. Whenever that

happened we knew what would follow : in a few minutes we should see him issuing from some door or window, licking his chops and followed by a native, male or female, bearing a cat by the tail and clamorous for two pauls. I looked up and saw that we had heedlessly taken the rue Saint-Ferdinand and were close to the shop of the optician. At the same instant I heard an uproar of devils behind a cask that stood by the door. I seized Jadin by the arm and showed him the window — the cat was missing ! He understood at once, rushed to the cask, picked up a pair of spectacles which he put on his nose, as if they were his he had lost, and marched away, followed by Milord. As for the luckless cat, she expired obscurely in the corner to which she had imprudently descended, and where Jadin had prudently left her corpse. This happened at the hour when, as Italians say disdainfully, no one is in the streets but dogs and Frenchmen. No one, therefore, witnessed the murder, not even the storks of the poet Ibicus, and not only did the crime remain unpunished but Jadin fell heir to the spectacles of the deceased. Those spectacles are now in Jadin's studio ; he shows them as the spectacles of the famous Abbé Meli, the Anacreon of Sicily. He has already refused a hundred crowns for them, offered by an Englishman, and says he would not part with them for twenty-five louis.

Our last visit in Catania was to the convent of San Nicolà, the richest in Sicily, the cupola of which, higher than any other in the city, was built about the middle of the 18th century from designs by

Contini. The church and the garden are the two remarkable features of this famous monastery; the church for its columns of verd antique, and for a very fine organ, the work of a Calabrese monk, who asked, as his only payment, to be buried under his masterpiece: the garden for the difficulties it has vanquished and for its noble view of Mount *Ætna*. As for its difficulties, its foundation is lava and every atom of its soil was brought there by the hand of man.

The rule of the monastery of San Nicolà was formerly very severe. The monks were to live on *Ætna* at the limit of the habitable region; their convent was therefore built a mile above Nicolosi, the last village on the way to the crater. But as all things weaken in the long run, this rule lost its rigour, little by little; first, the monks ceased to repair the buildings; next, one or two rooms having fallen in from the weight of snow, the worthy fathers judged it advisable to build the magnificent annex at Catania which took the name of San Nicolà il Nuovo, and after that they lived during the summer only at San Nicolà il Vecchio. This lasted for awhile and then San Nicolà il Vecchio was abandoned both summer and winter; though the brethren still kept an eye on *Ætna* from their beautiful old garden in Catania. There was talk for a few years of repairing the old buildings (though good care was taken not to do so), until finally a band of robbers, people hardier and less fastidious about their comforts than the worthy monks, took possession of the place and made it their abode.

In 1806 Count Weder, a blue-blooded German, as his name indicates, started from Vienna to visit Sicily; he embarked at Trieste, landed at Ancona, visited Rome and Naples, where he obtained certain letters of introduction, set sail at Naples, and disembarked at Catania. Count Weder had known for years of the existence of the monastery of San Nicolà and of its great reputation for possessing among its serving brothers the best cook in all Sicily. Now, Count Weder was a very distinguished gastronome, and he had been careful to obtain in Rome, from a cardinal with whom he had dined at the Austrian embassy, a letter of introduction to the superior of the monastery. The letter was urgent; it presented the count as a pious and fervent pilgrim, and requested that hospitality be shown him whenever it pleased him to visit the convent.

The count was learned after the manner of Germans; that is to say, he had read a great quantity of old and forgotten books; so that he was able in supporting his assertions, however erroneous and ridiculous they were, to quote a certain number of unknown names, which gave a sort of pedantic majesty to his paradoxes. Now, among these old books he had found a catalogue of all the Benedictine monasteries scattered over the surface of the globe, and he had seen and retained with the tenacity of the Teuton mind that the rule of the Benedictines of Catania enjoined them, as I have said, to live on the last confine of the *reggione coltivata* and the first of the *reggione nemorosa*. So, when he sent for a muleteer to take him to San Nicolà he

informed the muleteer that he desired to be taken to "San Nicolà sull' Ætna."

That was all the Italian the count knew.

There was no mistaking it; the direction was plain: nevertheless, the muleteer began to risk remarks; but the count shut his mouth with the words: "I bay vell." Every one knows the habitual power of that argument: the muleteer bowed to the count, and returned in half an hour with one mule.

"*Nein*," said the count, "two mules; my paggage."

"Does your Excellency take his baggage?"

"Of course."

"Oh!" said the muleteer, "I thought perhaps your Excellency would leave that at the inn; it would be safer."

"I nefer leaf my paggage."

The muleteer responded by an almost imperceptible sign that meant, "Every one his own way," and went off to get another mule. But after the mule was loaded the honest guide thought he owed it to his conscience to make a last remark:

"Is your Excellency quite decided?"

"Cerdainly," replied the count, sticking an enormous pair of pistols into the holsters of his saddle.

"You are going to San Nicolà il Vecchio?"

"I am."

"Then your Excellency has friends at San Nicolà il Vecchio?"

"I haf a letter for the cheneral."

"For the captain, your Excellency means?"

"For the cheneral, I zay."

"Hum ! hum !" muttered the guide.

"Bezides, I bay vell, I bay vell ; do you hear me, knafe ?"

"Excuse me," continued the guide, "but since your Excellency is so kindly disposed, would you mind paying me in advance ?"

"In adfance ! why zo ?"

"Because it is now three o'clock ; we shall not arrive till after dark and I must return immediately."

"Py night ?" said the count. "I subbose they haf subber at der gonfent ?"

"The convent ?"

"Yes, at San Nicolà."

"Oh ! certainly, they have supper ; the table is more likely to be spread by night than by day."

"The rogues !" said the count, and a gastronomic gleam illuminated his face. "Here's your bay, and someding for der gut news you gif me."

And he gave him three piastres which he took from a well-filled purse.

"Thank you, Excellency," replied the muleteer, who, once paid, had nothing more to say.

"Shall we start now ?" said the count.

"When you please, Excellency."

The guide helped the count to mount his mule and led the way, singing a species of canticle that sounded more like a *miserere* than a tarantella ; but the count was too absorbed in the thought of the fine supper he was about to eat to take notice of what was melancholy in the prelude.

The trip was made rather silently. The guide had ended by believing, on seeing the count's confi-

dence supported by his pistols, that he must be on the best of terms with the occupants of San Nicolà il Vecchio, and might be a member of some Bohemian band who did business with those of Sicily. As for himself, he knew that he had nothing to fear personally, muleteers being usually sacred to robbers, and especially so when they bring them so good a customer as the count appeared to be.

Nevertheless, at every village they passed on the way he lingered, on one pretence or another. It was really a species of compromise he was making with his conscience, in order to give the count time to make reflections and inquiries, and to return whence they came if so it pleased him. But at every halt the count would say, in a voice that hunger made urgent:

“En afant! come, come, en afant! der teufel! we shall nefer get dere.”

And off he went, followed by the amazed eyes of the peasantry, who had just heard from the muleteer the object of this strange pilgrimage, and could not conceive how any man should even dream of going to San Nicolà il Vecchio unless he was taken there by force.

The count and his guide went in this way through Gravina, Santa-Lucia di Catarica, Manunziata, and Nicolosi. Reaching the latter village, the guide made a last effort:

“Excellency,” he said, “if I were you I should sup and sleep here, and to-morrow I should take a little walk, as it were, and go, all alone, to San Nicolà.”

“You dold me dat I should find a gut subber und a gut ped at der gonfent.”

“*Pardieu*, yes,” replied the guide, “if they are willing to let you in.”

“Putt don’t I dell you I haf a letter to der chen-eral?”

“To the captain?”

“No, to the cheneral.”

“Then,” said the guide, “you are absolutely determined to go?”

“Cerdainly I am.”

“Very good; then let us go.”

And the pair set out again.

It was now dark, there was no moon, and they could not see a yard before them. But as the guide knew the way perfectly there was no risk of losing it. He took a little path that was scarcely perceptible, turning to right from the main path; then, beginning to leave the cultivated region, he entered that of the forests. After an hour’s march, a black building rose before them, at the windows of which no light was seen.

“There is San Nicolà il Vecchio,” said the guide, in a low voice.

“Ho! ho!” said the count, “dat’s a gonfent in a melangoly siduation.”

“If you like,” said the guide eagerly, “we can go back to Nicolosi, and if you don’t want to sleep at the inn, there is an excellent man, il Signore Gemellaro, who won’t refuse you a bed.”

“I don’t know him. Bezides, Saint Nigolà is where I wish to go, and not Nigolosi.”

"*Zerebello da tedesco*," muttered the Sicilian.

Then, whipping his mules, they were soon at the gate of the monastery.

The monastery had nothing reassuring on nearer view. It was an old structure of the twelfth century, where it was easy to read the ravages that each eruption had committed since the days of its foundation. The date of all the conflagrations and earthquakes was, as it were, sculptured on those stones. By certain dentellations that came out in vigorous relief against the dark-blue sky, now brilliant with stars, it was easy to see what part of the building had fallen into ruins. Yet the walls around the edifice seemed fairly well repaired and loopholes had been made in them, which gave San Nicolà il Vecchio more the appearance of a fortress than the aspect of a monastery.

The count looked at all this with a very calm air and told the muleteer to knock. The latter, who had made up his mind, raised the old iron knocker, eaten by the rust of time, and let it fall by its own weight. The stroke resounded through the depths of the convent and was answered by a shrill bell. Almost at the same moment a little window, made in the wall about eight feet from the ground, was opened. Through it came a long iron tube, directed towards the count's chest; a bearded head appeared at the aperture and a voice, which had no monachal unction, demanded:

"Who goes there?"

"Friend," replied the count, putting the muzzle of the gun aside with his hand, "friend."

At the same moment he fancied there came to him, through the open window, the smell of a roast that rejoiced his soul.

"Friend? hum! friend?" said the man at the window. "Who's to prove you are a friend?"

And he repointed the gun in its first direction.

"My fery tear prudder," replied the count, putting aside the weapon with the same coolness as before, "I gombrehend fery well that you should dake bre-gautions, pefore admitting strangers; I should do der same in your blace, but I haf a letter from Gardinal Morosini to your cheneral."

"For our captain?" said he of the gun.

"No, no, for your cheneral."

"Oh, well, it is all one. Are you alone?"

"All alone."

"Wait; they will let you in."

"Hum! dat zmells gut, dat roast," remarked the German, getting off his mule.

"Excellency," asked the muleteer, who, during this time, had unloaded the count's baggage. "You do not need me any longer?"

"Petter stay," said the count.

"No," said the muleteer; "with your permission I'd rather sleep elsewhere."

"Vell then, go," replied the count.

"Shall I come and fetch you back?"

"No, the cheneral will see to that."

"Very good. Adieu, Excellency."

"Adieu."

At this moment the key began to turn in the lock; the muleteer jumped on one of his mules,

seized the bridle of the other, and set off at a trot. He was already fifty yards distant when the gate opened.

"Dat zmells gut," said the German, inhaling the odour that came from the kitchen, "fery gut."

"You think so?" remarked the strange porter.

"Yes," said the count, "I do."

"That 's the chief's supper; he is on the road and we expect him every minute."

"Den I arrife in gut time," said the count, laughing.

"Does he know you, our chief?"

"No; putt I haf a letter for him."

"Ah! that 's another thing — let me see it."

"Here it is."

The porter took the letter and read the direction :

"*Al reverendissimo generale dei Benedettini; al convento di San Nicolà di Catania.*

"Ah! I understand," said the porter.

"Ah! you gombrehend; dat is fery lucky," said the count, patting him on the shoulder. "In dat case, my vrend, if you gombrehend, pring in my paggage, and take gut care of der bordmanteau; my burse is in it."

"Oh! that 's where your purse is — a good thing to know," said the porter, fetching the portmanteau with special alacrity.

Then, having brought in the rest of the baggage, he said: "I see you are a friend, so come along."

The count did not need to be asked twice; he followed his guide.

The interior aspect of the convent was not less

strange than its exterior. Ruins everywhere; many empty casks about; no images of saints or crucifixes. The count stopped a moment, for he was one of those talkers who have the bad habit of stopping when they speak, and he expressed his surprise at the devastation he saw.

"We can't help that," said his guide. "We are rather isolated, as you must have seen; and as the mountain is full of rascals who fear neither God nor the devil, we never leave the little that we own lying about. All the precious things we have are locked up in the cellar. Besides, you know we have another monastery down there in Catania."

"No, I did n't know. So! you haf anoder monastery? Tear — tear!"

"Now, please count your baggage yourself, so that you may swear to the chief that nothing has been taken."

"Oh! dat is fery eazy; one drunk, one garbet-pag, and one bordmanteau. I trust dat to you, dat bordmanteau, because my burse is in it."

"Three articles only, is that right? It is n't much."

"It is enough."

"You think so?"

"Yes, I dink so."

"Well, wait there," said the porter, showing the count into a species of cell. "I don't doubt the chief will be here in half an hour." And he made a movement to depart.

"Stop! stop! while waiting could I go into der gitchen? I can gif some gut advice to der gook."

“Faith! I don’t see any objection,” said the porter. “Wait here till I put your baggage in safety. How much money did you say there was in your purse?”

“Dree dousand six hundred and dwenty ducats.”

“Three thousand six hundred and twenty ducats; good,” remarked the porter.

“That zeems a fery worthy man,” murmured the count, looking at the brother as he carried away all his possessions, “a fery worthy man, indeed.”

Ten minutes later the porter returned.

“If you wish to go to the kitchen you can do so,” he said.

The count followed the Sicilian, who took him to the kitchen. The spit was turning, the ovens were baking, and saucepans boiled on all sides.

“Gut,” said the German, stopping on the lower step, and taking in with eye and nostril, this succulent scene, “gut, it zeems I haf not habbened on a vast tay. Gut evening, gook, gut evening.”

The cook had been notified; and he received the count with deference. The count profited by this reception to go round the kitchen, lift the covers of all the saucepans, and taste all the sauces. Suddenly he rushed upon the cook, who was in the act of shaking salt upon an omelet, and snatched the pan of eggs from his hand.

“Hey! vat is dat you do?” he cried.

“What am I doing?” said the cook. “I am salting an omelet.”

“Stop, miserable man, you don’t but zalt into an omeled; you but zugar and brezerves, and gooseperry jam.”

“Nonsense,” said the cook, trying to snatch the pan back again.

“No, no, no !” cried the count. “I’ll made das omeled ; gif me die jam.”

“Ha !” said the cook, getting angry, “we will soon see who is master here.”

“I am,” said a strong voice. “What is all this ?”

The count and the cook turned round. A man from forty to forty-five years of age, in a monk’s robe, stood upon the stairway ; he was tall, and had the hard, imperious countenance of those who are accustomed to command.

“The captain !” exclaimed the cook.

“Ah, the cheneral, gut,” said the count. “Cheneral,” he continued, going up to the monk, “I peg your bardon, but you haf a gook who does not know how to make omeleds.”

“Are you Count Weder, monsieur ?” said the monk, eyeing him.

“Yes, cheneral,” replied the count, not letting go of pan or fork and preparing to beat the eggs, “I am Count Weder in berzon.”

“Then it is you who brought me the letter of introduction which the porter has just given me ?”

“Myself.”

“You are very welcome, monsieur le comte.”

The count bowed.

“I regret that the situation of our convent, its long distance from other habitations, does not allow me to receive you more suitably ; we are poor hermits on a mountain, and you will pardon us, I hope, if our table is not well supplied.”



“What! not well zubbled! Why, der zubber, on die gontrary, zeems egzellent, and if your gook will make das omeled mit jam —”

“But, captain” — interposed the cook.

“Give the preserves to monsieur, and let him make his omelet as he likes.” The cook obeyed without a word. “Do not hurry yourself, monsieur le comte,” continued the monk; “make yourself at home, and as soon as the omelet is done to your liking, come up to us; we shall await you.”

“An affair of fife minutes, cheneral; haf zubber zerved.”

“You hear,” said the monk to the cook. “Serve the supper;” and he went upstairs.

The count, triumphant, finished his omelet and followed him.

The Superior was awaiting his guest with the whole community, consisting of some score of brothers, in a well-lighted refectory where a table was set in perfect style. The count was struck with the luxury of its silver-ware, and the fineness and beauty of the tablecloths and napkins. The convent had evidently taken from its treasure-house and presses the best it had, to do honour to its guest. As for the apartment, its dilapidated aspect contrasted strangely with the luxury displayed within it. It was a large hall which must formerly have been a chapel; in the altar of which a chimney had been constructed. The walls had no other decoration than spiders’ webs; and a few bats attracted by the light flitted about the ceiling, going in and out of the broken windows at will. A complete

arsenal of carbines was picturesquely arranged in one corner.

The count took all this in at a glance ; he admired the religious abnegation of the good fathers, who, possessing such treasures as those before his eyes, were willing to live exposed to the inclemency of the weather, like the ancient hermits of Mount Carmel and the Thebaïd. The Superior noticed his surprise.

“Monsieur le comte,” he said, “I beg your pardon once more for this poor house and the poor dinner which is all we can offer you. Perhaps your friends had pictured our convent to you as an abode of delight. That is how society judges, monsieur le comte. Therefore, when you return to the world I hope you will do us justice.”

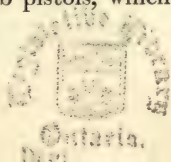
“Pless me ! cheneral,” replied the count ; “I see noding amiss mit der tinner, and I saw a fine tisblay of bots and bans in der gitchen, and if der fine is as gut —”

“Oh !” interrupted the Superior, “you may be easy as to that ; the wine is good.”

“Eh ! if der fine is gut, dat is all we need.”

“But I fear,” added the Superior, “that our ways may not seem to you quite monachal. For example, we never sup without a pair of pistols beside each of us ; that is a precaution against accidents that may happen at any moment in so lonely a place as this. You will therefore excuse us if, in spite of your presence, we follow our usual custom.”

So saying the Superior opened his gown and took from his belt a pair of superb pistols, which he laid beside him.



"Right, cheneral, right!" cried the German; "bistols are the vrends of man; I haf bistols myzelf, and — oh! it is amazing how like yours are to dem."

"Not so very amazing," said the Superior, repressing a smile; "they are very good weapons, made by Kukenreiter; I sent to Germany for them."

"Kukenreiters! zo are mine. Zend for mine, cheneral, they are mit my paggage, to gombare mit yours."

"After dinner, count, after dinner. Sit opposite to me, — there, that is right. Do you know your Benedicite?"

"Once, but now I haf forgot —"

"What a pity, for I counted on you to say it; but if you have forgotten it, we must do without it."

"Yes, yes," said the count, disposed to be very complying.

He ate his soup without a blessing, as did all the monks. When he had finished, the captain passed him a bottle.

"Taste that," he said.

The count, confident that he had to do with a very choice wine, filled a small glass, took it by the stem, examined for an instant by the nearest lamp the liquid, yellow as amber, within it; then he carried it to his lips and sipped it with the voluptuous slowness of a gourmet.

"'Tis astonishing," he said; "I who thought I knew all fines, I do not know dat."

"That is Marsala, — a wine that is not known, but deserves to be. Ah! our poor Sicily, she has many neglected treasures within her."

“What name tid you gall it?”

“Marsala.”

“Marzala: vell, it is a gut fine. I shall py some; is it tear?”

“Two sous a bottle.”

“What?” said the count, who thought he heard wrong.

“Two sous a bottle.”

“Doo sous a pottle! Vy, you haf baradise, cheneral; I shall nefer leaf you; I shall make myzself penedictine.”

“I must warn you that it has a defect,” said the Superior.

“Tefect! it has no tefects.”

“I beg your pardon; it is heady.”

“Heady!” said the count, contemptuously; “I could trink bints and not show it more than if I trank gooseperry zirop.”

“If so, don’t restrain yourself,” said the Superior; “do as you do at home; only, I assure you we have other wines.”

In virtue of the permission thus accorded, the count began to eat and drink like a true German; and it must be owned that he sustained the reputation of his compatriots admirably. The monks, encouraged by their Superior, would not allow themselves to be outdone by a stranger, so that presently the religious silence that reigned at the beginning of the repast was broken; each began to talk to his neighbour in a low voice, then loudly to the table at large. At the second course, every one was shouting at the top of his lungs and recounting the strangest

adventures it was possible to hear. The count, little as he could understand Sicilian, fancied he heard talk of bold deeds done by brigands, convents pillaged, gendarmes shot, nuns violated. But there was nothing surprising in that ; the isolated situation of these worthy Benedictines, their remoteness from the city, must have made them more than once the witnesses of such scenes. The Marsala still went round, without prejudice to the dry Siracusa, the muscat of Calabria, the malvoisie of Lipari. Strong as the count's head was, his eyes began to cover with a film and his tongue to thicken. Then monologues succeeded to conversations, and songs to monologues. The count, who desired to keep upon the level of his hosts, searched his anacreontic repertory, and finding nothing suitable for the moment but Schiller's famous brigand song, he began to sing with all his might : *Stehlen, morden, huren, balgen*, to which, it seemed to him, the company responded with loud applause.

Presently everything began to swim round about him ; he fancied he saw the monks throw off their religious gowns and transform themselves into bandits ; the ascetic faces changed character, and blazed with ferocious joy ; the dinner degenerated into an orgy ; still they went on drinking, and each time they drank it was some new wine, some heady wine, wine from the cellars of the Prince of Paterno or from those of the Dominicans of Aci-Reale ; they beat the table with the empty bottles, shouting for more ; the lamps were upset by the blows, the cloth took fire, then the napkins, then the table, and instead of extinguishing the flames they threw on

benches and chairs and stalls. In an instant the table was a bonfire, round which the monks, transformed to bandits, danced like demons. Suddenly, in the midst of the devilish uproar, the voice of the captain was heard, calling : *Le monache ! le monache !* A loud hurrah greeted this cry. An instant later a door opened and four nuns appeared, dragged in by four or five bandits. The count beheld all this as if in a dream, and (as in a dream) he felt that some superior force held his body in its place, while his mind was active elsewhere. In an instant the bandits sprang upon the poor girls ; the captain attempted to be heard, but his voice was drowned in the general clamour. Then it seemed to the count as if the captain pulled out his famous kuckenreiters, that were so like his own. He fancied he heard two shots ; he closed his eyes, dazzled by the flame. When he opened them he saw blood, two brigands writhing and howling on the floor, and the youngest of the nuns in the arms of the captain. Then he saw no more ; his eyes closed a second time without the power to open, his legs gave way under him, and he fell on the floor in a heap, dead-drunk.

When the count awoke it was broad daylight ; he rubbed his eyes and looked about him. He was lying under a tree at the edge of the woods ; on his right was Nicolosi, on his left Pedara, before him Catania, and beyond Catania the sea. He seemed to have passed the night under the stars, lying on a soft bed of sand, his head resting on his portmanteau, and without other dais than the illimitable azure of

the sky. At first he remembered nothing, and lay for some time like a man coming out of a lethargy ; at last his thought, by a slow and confused process, went backward ; he recalled his departure from Catania, the hesitations of his muleteer, his arrival at the monastery, his altercation with the cook, the welcome of the general, the dinner, the Marsala, the songs, the orgy, the fire, the nuns, and the pistol shots. He looked about him and saw his trunk, his carpet-bag, his portmanteau. He opened the latter and found his portfolio, his sea-foam pipe, his tobacco pouch, his purse — his purse, which, to his great amazement seemed as full as ever ; he opened it with anxiety ; yes, it was full of gold, and besides the gold there was a note ; the count opened it and read as follows :

MONSIEUR LE COMTE, — We offer you a thousand excuses for leaving you in so abrupt a manner ; but an expedition of the utmost importance takes us in the direction of Cefalu. I hope that you will not forget the hospitality of the Benedictines of San Nicolà il Vecchio, and I beg you, on your return to Rome, to ask Monsignore Morosini not to forget those poor sinners in his prayers.

You will find all your baggage, except the kukenreiters, which I ask your permission to keep as a souvenir of you.

DOM GAETANO

Prior of San Nicolà il Vecchio.

OCTOBER 16, 1806.

Count Weder examined his purse ; not a penny was missing.

When he reached Nicolosi, he found the village in commotion. The convent of Santa-Clara had been broken into, the silver pillaged, and four of the nuns carried off, without any clue as to where they were taken.

The count sent for his muleteer, remounted his mule, returned to Catania, and finding that a ship was about to sail for Naples, he went on board and quitted Sicily forever that same night.

Two years later he read in the "*Allgemeine Zeitung*" that the famous bandit chief Gaetano, who had taken possession of the monastery of San Nicolà il Vecchio on *Ætna* and made it a den of robbers, had been captured after a terrible struggle with an English regiment and hanged, to the great joy of the inhabitants of Catania, whom he seized for ransom in their very town itself.

V

ÆTNA

ON the day after our arrival at Catania we were resolved, as I have said, to attempt the ascension of Ætna. I say *attempt*, for it is pre-eminently the occasion when travellers can apply to themselves the proverb: "Man proposes, and God disposes."

No sight is more common than travellers starting from Catania to ascend the Ghibello (as Ætna is called in Sicily), and none more rare than the privileged beings who reach her crater. The reason is that during nine or ten months of the year the mountain is really inaccessible; until the 15th of June it is too early, after October 1st it is too late.

In this respect we fulfilled conditions, for we reached Catania September 5th: besides which, the day had been magnificent; no fog nor mist veiled Ætna. From all the streets that led that way we had seen her, the evening before, serene and majestic. The light smoke rising from the crater followed the direction of the wind, floating like a pennant; and the sun, which we had watched as it disappeared from the cupola of the Benedictines, glided in a sky without a cloud, promising for the morrow a day not less beautiful than the one that was ending.

So at five in the morning our guide woke us with the announcement that the weather was made ex-

pressly for us. We ran to the windows that looked on *Ætna*, and we saw the vast mountain bathing her colossal head in the blond vapours of the dawn. We could distinguish perfectly the three regions we had to cross before arriving at the summit : the cultivated region, the wooded region, the barren region. The cone, contrary to its usual state, was entirely without snow.

Ordinarily the ascent is not begun till four in the afternoon ; but we wished to stop a few hours at Nicolosi and visit Monte-Rosso, one of the many secondary volcanoes that bristle around *Ætna*. Besides which, I had heard of a certain Signore Gemellaro at Nicolosi, a modest and amiable learned man, who had lived there fifty years and would be pleased to answer all my questions. I asked for a letter to him and was told it was quite unnecessary ; his obliging hospitality being offered to all travellers undertaking the ascension, which was always painful and often dangerous.

At five o'clock, therefore, after providing ourselves with a bottle of the best rum we could find, we mounted our mules and started for Nicolosi, where the rest of our provisions were to be bought. Each wore his ordinary clothes, to which, in spite of our landlord's advice, we added nothing, being unable to suppose that after leaving Catania in a temperature fit to cook an egg we should find ten degrees of frost on the mountain.

I know nothing finer, more original, more varied, wilder and more fertile both, than the road that leads from Catania to Nicolosi, crossing, in turn, seas of

sand, oases of orange-trees, rivers of lava, carpets of harvest lands, and walls of black marble. Three or four villages are on the way, poor, wretched, pitiful, peopled with beggars, like other Sicilian villages; but with it all they have sonorous, poetic names, that resound like happy names, — Gravina, Santa-Lucia, Massanunziata. They stand on lava, are built with lava, and are roofed with lava. They come from the bowels of the mountain, and there they will return some day. They unfold on the surface of the volcano like poor flowers withered before they bloom, which the first stormy wind will carry off.

Between Massanunziata and Monte Miani on the right of the road is the Moat of the Dove. Whence came that tender name applied to a black and gloomy excavation, two hundred feet deep and one hundred and fifty wide? Our guide could not tell us.

We reached Nicolosi, a species of little country town built on the confines of the habitable world. Two or three miles before reaching it we began to enter a desolate region; although for half a mile above it we saw fine plantations and a slope covered with vineyards. Does some interior fire partially take the place of the heat of the sun, already much tempered at that height? This is another of the mysteries to which illiterate guides and learned travellers are equally unable to give the key.

We stopped at one of those hovels which Sicily alone has the audacity to baptize with the name of inn; and as it was still early we sent our cards, while breakfast was preparing, to Signore Gemellaro, asking permission to pay him a visit. He replied that

he was just sitting down to table, and that if we would share his meal we should be welcomed. Whatever might have been our desire, in view of the food that awaited us, to accept so gracious an offer, we had the discretion to refuse it and to content ourselves with a meal at the inn. This was a meritorious action, worthy to stand parallel with the severest fasts of the fathers of the desert.

Breakfast over, we ordered our guide to buy us a pair of chickens, or half a dozen pigeons of any kind, wring their necks, pluck them, and have them roasted. This was provision for our breakfast on the mountain the next day. That precaution taken, we started for the house of Signore Gemellaro, the most imposing in the village. The servant ushered us into the study where his master awaited us. As soon as I saw him I gave a cry of joy ; he was the very man who at Aci-Reale had so obligingly informed me of the way to the grotto of Polyphemus.

“ Ah ! it is you,” he said, on seeing us, “ I thought I should find you old acquaintances. Every traveller who sets foot in Sicily belongs to me of right ; he has to pass this way, and I catch him on the jump. Did you find your grotto ? ”

“ Easily, monsieur, thanks to your kindness, which we have come once more to put to proof.”

“ At your orders, gentlemen,” he said, making us a sign to sit down, “ and I venture to say that if you want information about this region you cannot do better than address yourselves to me.”

In fact, Signore Gemellaro had lived for sixty years in the village of Nicolosi, where he was born ;

and the occupation of his life was to observe the volcano that was seldom out of his sight. For sixty years the mountain had never made a motion of any kind that Signore Gemellaro did not instantly study it; the crater had not changed in shape twenty-four hours before Signore Gemellaro had drawn it under its new aspect; the smoke never thickened or volatilized a single time that Signore Gemellaro did not gather from its darkening or its tenuity auguries that results never failed to confirm. In short, Signore Gemellaro was, and is, the modern Empedocles; but I hope that, wiser than him of old, he will be buried with both slippers. Thus, the Signore Gemellaro knows his *Ætna* to the tips of his fingers. The mountain has not thrown up a mouthful of lava for 3000 years that Signore Gemellaro does not possess a specimen of it; in fact, there is nothing in this region down to the island Julia, of which Signore Gemellaro does not own a fragment.

My readers have doubtless heard of the island Julia, that ephemeral isle that had but three months' existence, it is true, but which made more noise during its passage through this world than other islands existing since the deluge.

One fine morning of the month of July, 1831, the island Julia rose from the depths of the sea and appeared upon its surface. It was six miles round, it had mountains and valleys like other isles; it had even a spring; true, that spring was of boiling water. Scarcely had this island issued from the main when an English vessel passed; in whatever part of the seas a phenomenon of any kind occurs, an

English vessel is sure to be passing just then. The captain, amazed at seeing an island where his chart did not indicate so much as a rock, hove-to, and getting into his gig went ashore upon it. He noted that it lay in latitude 38° ; that it had mountains, valleys, and a spring of boiling water. He sent for eggs and tea, and breakfasted by the spring; after which he took the flag of England and planting it at the top of the highest mount, he pronounced these sacramental words: "I take possession of this territory in the name of His Britannic Majesty." Then he returned to his ship and set sail for England, where he arrived safely and announced that he had discovered in the Mediterranean a hitherto unknown island, which he had named Julia in honour of the month of July, the date of his discovery, and of which he had taken possession in the name of Great Britain.

Immediately after the English ship had left the island a Neapolitan ship came by, and was no less astonished than its predecessor had been. At sight of this unknown island the captain, a prudent man, took in sail in order to keep at a respectful distance. Then he levelled his glass, and by the aid of that instrument he saw that the island was uninhabited, that it had valleys and a mountain, and that from the summit of that mountain floated the British flag. He immediately called out for four volunteers to go and see what it meant. Two Sicilians presented themselves, got into the boat, and started. A quarter of an hour later they returned bringing with them the English flag. The Neapolitan cap-

tain then declared that he took possession of the island in the name of the King of the Two Sicilies, and he named it Isola San Ferdinando. After which he returned to Naples, asked an audience of the king, told him he had discovered an island, thirty miles in circumference, covered with orange-trees, lemon-trees and pomegranates, in which was a mountain higher than Vesuvius, a valley like that of Jehoshaphat, and a spring of mineral water, on which a bathing establishment could be set up finer than that of Ischia. He added, by the way and without dwelling on details, that an English vessel having attempted to dispute the possession of the isle, he had sunk the said ship, in proof of which he had brought back her flag. The minister of the navy, who was present at the audience, thought this proceeding rather questionable; but the King of Naples entirely approved of his captain, made him an admiral, and decorated him with the grand cordon of Saint Januarius.

The next day it was announced in all the three newspapers of Naples that Admiral Bonnacorri, Duke of Saint-Ferdinand, had discovered in the Mediterranean an island, forty-five miles in circumference, inhabited by a people who spoke an unknown language, the king of which had offered to the admiral the hand of his only daughter. Each journal also contained a sonnet to the glory of the adventurous navigator. The first compared him to Vasco di Gama, the second to Christopher Columbus, the third to Amerigo Vespucci.

The next day the British ambassador went to ask

explanations from the minister of the Neapolitan navy touching rumours injurious to the honour of Great Britain as to the destruction of an English vessel which Admiral Bonnacorri claimed to have sunk. The minister of the navy replied that he certainly had heard some vague rumour of that kind, but he was not aware, so far, whether it was the English or the Neapolitan vessel that was sunk. Far from being satisfied with this explanation, the British ambassador asserted that his nation had been insulted by the mere idea that an English vessel could be sunk by any vessel whatsoever, and he demanded his passports. The minister of the navy referred the matter to the King of Naples, who ordered him to sign all the passports the ambassador desired, and he commanded that his own ambassador in London should be ordered to quit the capital of Great Britain at once.

Meantime the British government followed up the taking possession of the Julia Island with its usual activity. It was the very stopping-place they had wanted so long on the way from Gibraltar to Malta. An old lieutenant who had lost a leg at Aboukir and who for some time past had been soliciting a reward of any kind from the Lords of the Admiralty, was appointed governor of the Julia Island, and received orders to embark immediately for his government. The worthy sailor sold a little family estate he had inherited from his ancestors, bought the articles of chief necessity for colonization, went aboard his frigate, the "Dart," with his wife and two daughters, doubled Cape Bretagne, sailed down

the Bay of Biscay, passed through the Straits of Gibraltar, entered the Mediterranean, called at Pantellaria, arrived at latitude 38° , and looked about him. He saw no Julia Island — Julia Island had disappeared, and it is certain that never, oh ! never more, has any one heard tell of it.

The two belligerent powers who had both made warlike preparations continued to show their teeth at each other for some eighteen months ; then their snarling grin degenerated into a stiff smile, until at last they embraced each other, and all was over.

Let us leave the Julia Island, or the Isola San Ferdinando, whichever they choose to call it, and return to *Ætna*, which may very well be suspected of being the author of this bad joke that came so near upsetting the tranquillity of Europe.

The word “ *Ætna* ” is, according to the learned, a Phœnician word, signifying the *mount of the furnace*. The Phœnician language was, it will be seen, in the style of that which Covielle spoke to the Bourgeois Gentilhomme — expressive of much in few letters. Many poets of antiquity declare that the mountain was the place where Deucalion and Pyrrha took refuge during the flood of the universe. On that ground, Signore Gemellaro, who was born at Nicolosi, can undoubtedly claim the honour of being descended in direct line from one of the first stones they threw behind them. That leaves the Rohans, the Montmorencys, and the Noailles at an illimitable distance.

Homer speaks of *Ætna*, but without describing it as a volcano. Pindar calls it a pillar of heaven. Thucydides mentions three explosions after the ar-

rival of the Hellenic colonies that came before the one in which he lived. There were two eruptions at the period of the Dionysiuses; after that, they succeeded one another so rapidly that none but the violent ones were counted.¹

Since the eruption of 1781, *Ætna* has had, now and then, a little notion of upsetting Sicily, but as these whims have had no serious result it is permissible to suppose that what she has done in that way was solely out of self-respect and to preserve her position as a volcano.

Of all these eruptions the most terrible was that of 1669. As this eruption issued from Monte-Rosso which is only half a mile from Nicolosi, Jadin and I started to see the crater, after promising Signore Gemellaro to dine with him.

It should be distinctly understood that *Ætna* considers herself too far above all other volcanoes to proceed as they do. Vesuvius, Stromboli, and even Hecla pour the lava from the top of their craters, as wine overflows too full a glass. *Ætna* does not give herself that trouble. Her crater is merely a show crater, a crater of ceremony, which contents itself by playing cup-and-ball with incandescent rocks as large as ordinary houses, which the eye can follow in their aerial ascension as it follows the flight of shells from a mortar; but during that exhibition the real eruption is going on elsewhere. When *Ætna*

¹ The chief eruptions of *Ætna* were in 662 B. C., and, for the Christian era, in the years 225, 420, 812, 1169, 1285, 1329, 1333, 1408, 1444, 1446, 1447, 1536, 1603, 1607, 1610, 1614, 1619, 1634, 1669, 1682, 1688, 1689, 1702, 1766, and 1781.

is in travail there rises on her back, in one spot or another, a species of boil about the size of Montmartre ; then the boil bursts, and a river of lava pours down following the slope, burning or overthrowing everything on its way until it ends in the sea. This method of proceeding is the reason why *Ætna* is covered with a quantity of little crater-cones that look like huge hay-cocks ; each of these secondary volcanoes has its name and its own particular date, and all have made in their time more or less noise, and done more or less damage.

The Monte-Rosso is in the first rank of this secondary aristocracy ; it would be considered, in any neighbourhood but that of the Andes, the Cordilleras, and the Alps, a very pretty little mountain, of an altitude of 900 feet ; that is to say, three times the height of the towers of Notre-Dame. This volcano owes its name to the terrous scoriæ of which it is formed ; the ascent is easy, and a climb of half an hour brings one to the crater. This is a species of well, divided at the bottom like a salt-cellar, which at the present time has a good-natured air of perfect tranquillity. Although there is no path into it, persons can, if necessary, be lowered down by ropes ; its depth is about 200 feet, its circumference five or six hundred.

This was the mouth, now mute and cold, from which there issued, in 1669, such a rain of stones and ashes that the sun was, literally, obscured for three months, and the wind blew the ashes to Malta. The violence of the evacuation was such that a rock fifty feet long was flung to a distance of one thousand feet from the

crater whence it came, where it plunged into the ground to a depth of twenty-five feet. Then the lava followed the rock, rose boiling to the orifice, overflowed on the southern slope, and leaving Nicolosi to right and Boriello to left, began to flow, not as a torrent but as a river of fire, covering with its burning current the villages of Campo-Rotondo, San Pietro, and Gigganeo, till it threw itself into the harbour of Catania, driving before it a portion of the town. There a terrible struggle between fire and water began; the sea, forced back, at first gave way and recoiled three-quarters of a mile disclosing its depths to the human eye. Ships were burned in port, large fish floated dead upon the surface of the water. Then, as if furious at its defeat, the sea returned to attack the lava. The struggle lasted fifteen days; finally, the vanquished lava stopped, and from its molten state passed to a solid one. Fifteen days longer the sea boiled still, stiffening the new shore it was forced to accept; then, little by little, the ebullition ceased. But the entire region was devastated; three villages were annihilated, Catania was three-fourths destroyed, and its port more than half filled up.

From the top of Monte-Rosso, or rather the Monti-Rossi, for the mountain divides into two summits like Vesuvius, one sees the whole of this flow of lava, five leagues long and at places three leagues wide, which two centuries have been unable to cover with more than two inches of earth. From the point where I stood, to right, to left, before and behind me, within the circumference my eye could take in, I counted twenty-six mountains, all produced by vol-

canic eruptions and similar in form and height to the one on which I was.

In turning my eyes around me I observed at the foot of another extinct volcano, the remains of the famous convent of San Nicolà il Vecchio; on our way down from the Monti Rossi we visited its ruins. It was built, according to Farello, by Count Simon, grandson of the Norman Roger, the most popular conqueror of Sicily, known to this day by every peasant as the "Comte Ruggiero." Some *savants* insist that the monastery stands on the site of the ancient city of Inessa; others declare that the said ancient city stood on the opposite slope of Ætna; volumes on the subject have been exchanged between the erudites of Catania, Taormina, and Messina, with the result that the facts are more obscure than before; each and all having such excellent proofs for their own opinion. On my return to Catania one of them asked me what was thought on the subject by the Academy of Sciences in Paris. I replied that the Academy of Sciences, after pondering this grave question for some time, had recognized the fact that two cities of Inessa must have existed, built in rivalry to each other; one by the Naxians on the southern slope of Ætna, the other by the Siccans on the northern slope. The *savant* struck his brow as though he felt illuminated by a sudden idea, ran to his desk, took a pen, and began a volume which, as I have since been told, throws a flood of light on this important question.

This monastery, where, according to the intentions of its pious founder, the Benedictines were condemned

to live exposed to the ravages of the volcano which their prayers ought to have exorcised, is little more than a ruin. The parts best preserved are the chapel and the famous hall where Count Weder, a second Faust, was present at the saturnalia of Gaetano-Mephistopheles. A plateau which overhangs the monastery is nothing else than a mass of black lava rent into deep gulfs, from the upper part of which we could look down upon an amphitheatre of extinct craters.

After inspecting the ruins of this doubly interesting monastery we descended to dine, at half-past four o'clock, with our excellent host Gemellaro, and with all the more alacrity because our morning meal had well prepared us for a second. We found the table laid, having hit upon the rare and fleeting moment when no one waits or causes others to do so.

Signore Gemellaro is one of those learned men in whom I delight; learned experimenters, who detest all theories and talk only of what they have seen. During dinner the conversation rolled, of course, upon the mountain of our host. I say *his* mountain, for he is well convinced that *Ætna* belongs to him, and he would be much astonished if the King of the Two Sicilies set up a counter claim. After *Ætna*, that which Signore Gemellaro thinks grandest and finest is Napoleon, that other extinct volcano, which, during an eruption of fourteen years, caused such earthquakes under thrones and empires. His dream was to possess a complete collection of all the engravings made upon his hero. I distressed him by telling him there were enough to load four vessels, and that the crater of Monte-Rosso could not contain them.

After dinner our host inquired into the preparations we had made for ascending *Ætna*. We told him they were limited to a bottle of rum and the roasting of two or three chickens. Signore Gemellaro then cast his eyes on our costumes, and observing Jadin with a woollen shirt and me with a linen jacket, he asked us, shivering, if we had neither cloaks nor overcoats. We told him that for the moment we possessed absolutely nothing but what was on our backs. "True Frenchmen!" he muttered, rising. "No German or Englishman would start in that way. Wait, wait!" And he fetched us two heavy overcoats with hoods, like our military greatcoats, assuring us that we should not be a couple of miles above Nicolosi before we did homage to his foresight.

Our talk lasted till nine at night, when the guide came round with our mules. We asked him if he had succeeded in procuring provisions. He showed us four of those miserable fowls that exist only in Italy; all four were not worth a good tame pigeon. He had also bought two bottles of wine, bread, grapes, and pears; with that, he said, any one could make the tour of the world.

We mounted our animals and set out into a night that seemed to us, coming from a lighted room, to be frightfully dark; but, little by little, we began to distinguish the landscape, thanks to the myriad of stars that strewed the sky. At first we felt, by the way our mules sank beneath us, that we were crossing sand. Soon we reached the second region, that of forests, if indeed a few sparse, sickly, stunted trees deserved that name. We rode through it for

nearly two hours, following with confidence the path our guide, or rather our mules, had taken; a path which, to judge by its eternal ups and downs, seemed frightfully rugged. Already, for more than an hour, we had felt the justice of Signore Gemellaro's predictions with regard to cold, so that when we arrived at a species of hut without a roof, where our mules stopped of themselves, we put on our hooded coats. This hut was called the "Casa del Bosco" or "della Neve," — house of the Wood or the Snow, — names that suit it successively, summer and winter. This, said our guide, was our halting-place. We were now half-way up the path to the Casa Inglese, only we had, as the peasants say, eaten our white bread first.

The Casa della Neve was a prelude to the desolation that awaited us higher up. Without roof, without shutters, without doors, it offered no shelter but its four walls. Fortunately, our guide had supplied himself with a little axe; he brought us an armful of wood, and with the help of a phosphorus match we kindled a roaring fire. The reader will understand how welcome it was when I tell him that a little pocket thermometer that I carried with me, went down 18 degrees [Réaumur] since leaving Catania.

Our fire lighted, the guide advised us to go to sleep, and he left us alone to attend to his mules. We tried to follow his advice; but no! we were as wide-awake as mice; it was impossible to close an eye; but we made up for sleep by several glasses of rum and a variety of jokes on Parisian friends, who were at that hour snugly taking their tea and little thinking that Jadin and I were gadding among the forests

and craters of *Ætna*. We remained, sleepless, in the hut till half-past twelve o'clock, at which hour our guide requested us to remount our mules.

During our halt the heavens were enriched with a crescent moon ; slim as it was it cast a little light ; the trees were becoming fewer and fewer, until they ceased altogether. We were now entering the third region, and we could feel by the feet of our mules when they trod on lava, when they crossed ashes, or when they were trampling a species of moss, the only vegetation that grows at that height. As for eyes, they were of little or no utility ; the ground appeared to them more or less coloured, and that was all ; we were quite unable in such obscurity to distinguish details.

The higher we went, the more intense became the cold, and in spite of our coats and hoods we were frozen. This change of temperature had suspended conversation ; each of us, concentrated within himself as if to preserve what warmth he had, rode on silently. I went first, and though I could not see the ground on which we advanced, I could perfectly distinguish on our right gigantic escarpments and vast peaks rising like giants, their black forms defined upon the indigo sky. The farther we advanced, the more these apparitions took a weird, phantasmal aspect ; one felt that Nature had never made these mountains thus ; but that some long and mighty struggle had despoiled them. We were crossing the battle-field of Titans ; we were climbing Pelion piled on Ossa.

It was all terrible, sombre, majestic ; I saw and felt

the poesy of this nocturnal journey, but I was so cold that I had no courage to exchange a word with Jadin to ask him if these visions were the effect of torpor, or whether I was dreaming. From time to time strange mysterious noises, resembling no noises that I had ever heard, came from the bowels of the earth, which seemed to moan and groan like a living being. These noises had something unexpected, lugubrious, and solemn that made one shiver. Often, at the sound, the mules would stop and stoop their smoking nostrils to the soil, then, raising their heads, neigh sadly, as if they wanted to make it known they comprehended that great voice of the Solitude, and that it was not of their own will they had come there to trouble its mysteries.

Ever as we rose, minute by minute the cold became more intense; scarcely had I strength to lift my flask of rum to my lips. Moreover, that operation was followed by another more difficult still—that of corking the flask; my hands were so frozen that they had no sensation of the things they touched, and my feet were so heavy they seemed to have an iron weight attached to each leg. At last, feeling that I was stiffening into torpidity more and more, I made an effort over myself, stopped my mule, and dismounted. While doing this, Jadin passed me on his animal. I asked him if he did not want to do likewise; he shook his head in sign of refusal and rode on. At first it was impossible to walk; I seemed to be setting my naked feet on millions of pins and needles. The idea occurred to me to use my mule, and I grasped his tail. But he was

too well satisfied at having got rid of me not to preserve his independence if he could. Hardly had he felt the contact of my hand when he flung out his two hind-legs ; one of them struck me in the thigh and threw me ten feet back. My guide ran to help me and lifted me up.

Nothing was broken ; moreover, the commotion had put my blood in circulation ; I felt almost no pain, although my fall showed that the blow had been violent. I began to walk and I felt much better. A hundred steps farther on I found Jadin waiting for me. My mule, which had joined his without me or the guide, told him that an accident of some kind had happened. I reassured him, and we went on, I on foot. It was now two o'clock in the morning. The sombre arch of the sky was beginning to pale ; a faint dawn lighted the ground on which we trod, bringing with it a more glacial air than that we had hitherto breathed. In this pallid, lustreless light we presently saw before us something that looked like a house ; we approached it, Jadin on his mule at a trot, and I running as best I could. The guide pushed open a door, and we entered the Casa Inglese, built at the foot of the cone for the comfort of travellers.

My first cry was for fire ; it was one of those instinctive desires which are easier to form than to see accomplished ; the upper limits of the forest are six long miles from the Casa, and in its neighbourhood — all lava, ashes and snow — not a blade of grass, not a plant can grow. The guide lighted a lamp that he found in a corner, closed the door as

hermetically as possible, and told us to warm ourselves as best we could by wrapping our hooded coats about us and eating something, while he took the mules to the stable.

As, all things considered, the wisest thing to do was to get out of the state of torpor in which we were, we began to tramp up and down as well as we could. Within the house the thermometer was six degrees below zero [Réaumur], a difference of 41 degrees from the temperature of Catania.

Our guide returned, bringing a handful of straw and a few dry branches, which we owed no doubt to the magnificence of some Englishman who had preceded us. It sometimes happens that those worthy insularies, always perfectly well-informed as to the precautions they ought to take, hire an extra mule, and in crossing the forest load it with wood. Little of an Anglomaniac as I am, this is a piece of advice that I give to whosoever intends to make the ascent of *Ætna*. A mule costs one piastre, and I know I would gladly have given ten louis for a faggot.

The sight of the fire, however short its duration, restored our courage. We gathered to it as if to devour it, stretching our feet into the flame; and then, a little thawed, we proceeded to think of breakfast.

Everything was frozen, — bread, chickens, wine, fruits; nothing but our rum remained intact. We devoured two of the chickens as if they were larks; we gave the third to our guide and kept the fourth for hunger to come. As for the fruit, it was

like biting into ice ; we therefore drank a cup of rum in place of dessert and felt ourselves a little revived.

It was half past three o'clock in the morning. Our guide reminded us that we had still before us an ascent of three-quarters of an hour at the very least, and that if we wished to reach the summit of the cone before sunrise there was no time to lose.

We left the Casa Inglese. Objects were now beginning to be distinguishable ; all around us extended a vast plain of snow, in the middle of which, sloping at an angle of 45 degrees or about that, rose the cone of *Ætna*. Below us all was darkness ; in the east alone, the faintest tint of opal coloured the sky, on which were vigorously defined the mountains of Calabria.

At a hundred steps beyond the Casa we found the first billows of a plain of lava, its jet black tones contrasting with the snow in the midst of which it lay like a sombre island. We were forced to mount its solid waves, clambering from one to another as I had already done at Chamounix upon the *Mer de Glace*, — with this difference, that the sharp spines of the lava cut the leather of our boots and wounded our feet. This crossing, which lasted a quarter of an hour, was one of the most painful incidents of the trip.

At last we reached the foot of the cone, which, though it rises thirteen hundred feet from the plateau on which we stood, was entirely free of snow, either because its slope is too rapid for the snow to remain, or because its inward fires will not allow a flake upon

its surface. This is the cone, eternally in motion, that changes its shape with every new eruption, burying that shape in the old crater, and re-forming itself with another.

We began to climb this new mountain, wholly composed of friable earth, mingled with stones which loosened beneath our feet and rolled away behind us. At certain places the pitch was so steep that we could touch with our hands the slope above us without stooping; and as we rose, the air rarefied and became at every moment less and less breathable. I remembered all that Balmat had told me of his first ascension of Mont Blanc, and I began to feel precisely the same effects. Though we were already nearly a thousand feet above the line of eternal snows and had still eight hundred feet to climb, the hooded coat I had upon my shoulders became unbearable, and I felt it was impossible to carry it a moment longer; it weighed upon me like one of those leaden copes that Dante saw in hell's sixth circle crushing the shoulders of hypocrites. I therefore left it on the path, not having the courage to carry it farther, and told the guide to pick it up as we repassed. Soon it was the same with the stick I held in my hand and the hat I wore on my head. I abandoned the two articles successively, and they rolled to the foot of the cone, where they were stopped by the sea of lava, so steep was the descent. I saw Jadin in his turn getting rid of all the superfluities of his equipment, and stopping at every hundred feet to recover his breath.

We were only a third of the way up; we had taken

nearly half an hour to climb four hundred feet ; the eastern sky grew lighter and lighter ; the fear of not arriving at the summit of the cone in time for the sunrise spurred our courage, and we started with fresh vigour, not pausing to look about us at the vast horizon that enlarged at every step around our feet. But the farther we advanced, the more the difficulties increased ; the slope became more rapid, the ground more friable, the air more rarefied. Soon we began to hear, on our right, subterranean roars that forced themselves on our attention ; our guide walked in advance, and led us to a fissure from which a great noise issued, and, driven by some inward current of air, a thick, sulphureous smoke. Approaching the edge of this cleft we saw, at a depth we could not measure, an incandescent red and liquid bottom. Fortunately the wind did not send the smoke in our direction, or we should have been asphyxiated, so horrible an odour of sulphur came with it.

After a halt of some minutes on the edge of this furnace, we started again, going up diagonally for greater ease. My head began to beat and ring, as though the blood were coming out of my ears, and the air, that grew less and less breathable, made me pant as if my breath would fail me altogether. I wished to lie down and rest a moment, but the earth exhaled such an odour of sulphur that I could not do so. I then bethought me of binding my cravat across my mouth and breathing through its texture ; that relieved me.

At last, little by little, we arrived at three-quarters

of the ascent, and we saw at a few hundred steps above us the summit of the mountain. Then we made a final effort and, half upright and partly on all-fours, we clambered that short distance, not daring to look below us for fear our heads should turn giddy, so steep was the fall of the ground. At last Jadin, who was a few steps in advance of me, uttered a cry of triumph; he was there! he stood in front of the crater, and a few seconds later I was beside him. We found ourselves literally between two abysses.

Once there, and needing no longer to make violent motions, we began to breathe with more facility; besides which, the spectacle before our eyes was so striking that our discomforts disappeared, great as they were.

We stood in front of the crater, — that is to say, of an immense pit, eight miles in circumference and nine hundred feet deep; the walls of this vast excavation being covered from top to bottom with scarified substances of sulphur and alum. At the bottom, so far as we could see from the distance at which we stood, there was some substance then in ebullition, and from the monstrous abyss rose a slender, tortuous smoke like a gigantic snake standing erect on its tail. The edges of the crater were scooped out irregularly and more or less elevated. We stood on one of its highest points.

Our guide left us for a moment to contemplate that spectacle in silence, merely catching us from time to time by our jackets when we went too near the edge; for the stone is so friable that it might

easily give way beneath our feet and renew the old story of Empedocles; then he asked us to stand at some twenty feet distance from the crater to avoid all risk of accident, and to look about us.

The east, which had passed from the opal tints we had seen at the Casa Inglese to a tender rose, was now suffused with the flames of the sun, whose disk was beginning to rise beyond the mountains of Calabria. On the flanks of those mountains, of a dark and uniform blue, the villages and towns detached themselves like small white spots. The Straits of Messina seemed a little river, while to right and left the seas stretched away like mirrors. To left the mirror was dotted with black specks; these specks were the islands of the Liparian archipelago. From time to time one of them shone out like an intermittent lighthouse; it was Stromboli, casting its flame. To the west, all was still dark. The shadow of *Ætna* was thrown across the whole of western Sicily.

During three-quarters of an hour the sight grew more and more magnificent. I have seen the sunrise from the Righi and the Faulhorn, those titans of Switzerland; but nothing is comparable to what is seen from *Ætna*: before us, Calabria from the Pizzo to Cape Dell'Armi, the Straits from Scylla to Reggio, the Tyrrhenian Sea, and the Ionian Sea; to left, the isles of Eolus, that seem within reach of one's hand; to right, Malta, floating on the horizon like a semi-transparent mist; around us, all Sicily, seen as the bird sees it, with its shores dentelled by capes, promontories, ports, bays, roadsteads; its fifteen cities,

its three hundred villages; its mountains that look like hillocks, its valleys like the furrow of a plough-share; its rivers, threads of silver through the meads; and last, the crater, immense, bellowing, filled with flames and smoke; above its head the heavens, and hell beneath its feet: such a sight made us forget all — fatigue, danger, suffering. I admired wholly, without restriction, in perfect faith, with the eyes of the body and the eyes of the soul. Never had I seen God so near and, consequently, so great.

We stayed an hour thus, surveying the entire old world of Homer, Virgil, Ovid, and Theocritus, without the idea occurring to either Jadin or myself to touch a pencil, so much did we feel that the scene entered deeply into our hearts and would remain engraved there without the help of sketch or writing. Then we cast a last look on that horizon of fifteen hundred miles, which is seen but once in a lifetime, and began the descent.

Except for the danger of rolling from the top to the bottom of the cone, the difficulty of descending is not comparable to that of the ascent. In ten minutes we were on the lava island, and a quarter of an hour later at the Casa Inglese. The cold, though stinging, had ceased to be painful; we entered the house to arrange ourselves a little, for our toilet, as I have said, had undergone a variety of modifications during the ascent.

This English house, which the ingratitude of travellers will end by reducing to the condition of the Casa della Neve, is still a precious gift, although

an indirect one, of the scientific philanthropy of our excellent host, Signore Gemellaro. He was scarcely twenty years of age before he saw of what incalculable benefit to persons ascending for meteorological experiments would be a house where they could rest during the fatigue of ascension, and get relief from the excessive cold that renders the region uninhabitable. As a result, he addressed his co-citizens, by voice and in writing, ten several times, trying to obtain from them a voluntary subscription ; but his efforts had no success.

About this time a little inheritance came to him ; he then resolved to have recourse to no one ; and he built with his own money a little house, which he left open gratuitously for travellers. This house was situated, by his calculation and that of his brother, at a height of 9219 feet above sea-level. A grateful traveller wrote upon its door these words :

Casa hæc quantula Etnam perlustrantibus gratissima.

The house was thenceforth called La Gratissima.

But in building La Gratissima, Signore Gemellaro had done only as much as his individual means enabled him to do ; that is, he had given a shelter for scientific men. That was not enough, he thought ; he wished to supply means of study to such men by furnishing all the instruments necessary for the meteorological observations that they came from all parts of the world to make. This was at the period when the English occupied Sicily. Signore Gemellaro applied to Lord Forbes, the general of the British army.

Lord Forbes not only adopted Gemellaro's plan, but he resolved to give it an even broader development. He opened a subscription, at the head of which he put his own name for 71,000 francs. The subscription thus headed soon amounted to the desired sum, and Lord Forbes built, close beside the little house of Gemellaro, called for the last seven years *La Gratissima*, a building of three rooms, two studies, and a stable for sixteen horses. This was the house, a palace compared to its puny neighbour, which was called, after its founders, the *Casa Inglese*. At the present time *La Gratissima* is in ruins, and the English house, dilapidated more and more by passing travellers, threatens soon to offer them nothing better than the shelter of four walls.¹

After a short halt of a quarter of an hour to dispose of our last chicken and the rest of our bread, we left the *Casa Inglese* and came out upon the plateau called, in derision no doubt, the plain *del Frumento* [wheat]. It was entirely covered with snow, although this was the hottest time of year. We turned aside to the left to see the valley *del Bove*; at every step we made in the virgin snow we sank six inches at the least.

The valley *del Bove* would make a magnificent decoration for hell in the "*Diabole Amoureux*" or "*La Tentation*." I have never seen anything more gloomy, more desolate, than this gigantic precipice,

¹ It was repaired on the occasion of a visit from King Umberto, and is now kept up by the Italian Alpine Club. An observatory has been built beside it. — Tr.

with its cascades of jet-black lava, congealed in their course down the incandescent earth. Not a tree, not an herb, not a moss, not a living thing; a total absence of noise, movement, and life itself. To the three regions dividing *Ætna* there should certainly be added a fourth more terrible than the rest — that of fire. In the depths of the valley *del Bove*, we saw, three or four thousand feet below us, two extinct volcanoes opening their twin jaws. They looked to us like molehills, but they were really mountains 1500 feet high.

It needed all the insistence of our guide to tear us from this spectacle; the assurance that we had thirty miles to do in returning to Catania had little or no effect upon us. There was Catania beneath our feet; we could almost touch it; how could there be those thirty miles the guide talked of?

We mounted our mules, however, and started. Four hours later we were again with Signore Gemellaro; we had quitted him with a feeling of friendship, we returned to him with feelings of gratitude. And yet he is one of the men whom governments forget; no recollection of his merit seeks him out, no favours reward him. Signore Gemellaro is not even a correspondent of the Institute! It is true that this good and dear Gemellaro is neither the better nor the worse for that.

We reached Catania at eleven at night, and the next day, by five in the morning, we were once more on board our *speronara* and setting sail for Siracusa.

VI

SIRACUSA

OUR return was joy to the whole ship's company. Apart from the kick of the mule, from which, it is true, I still felt a rather sharp pain, the journey had ended without accident. Each sailor kissed our hands as if, like Æneas, we returned from hell. As for Milord, who since the affair of the optician's cat had been as much as possible imprisoned on board in charge of his two friends, Pietro and Giovanni, his joy was unbounded.

The weather was magnificent. Since our great tempest not a cloud was in the sky ; the wind, coming from Calabria pushed us gently as if by its hand. The coast we were hugging was peopled with memories. At a league from Catania a few scattered stones still mark the site of ancient Hybla ; after Hybla came the Symæthus, which has changed its ancient classic name to that of Giaretta. Formerly, so say the ancients, the Symæthus was navigable ; to-day it bears not the tiniest little boat. In exchange, its waters, receiving the sulphureous oils, the naphtha jets, and the petroleum of Ætna, have the faculty of condensing that bituminous liquid, thus enriching its mouth with a beautiful yellow amber, which the peasants collect and take to Catania, where it is carved.

Next, we came within sight of the lake Pergusa, where, as Ovid tells us, the swans are not seen to glide,—a tranquil, transparent, meditative lake, veiled by a curtain of forests and reflecting on its bosom the flowers of an eternal springtide. It was on its bank that Persephone was playing with her young companions, filling her basket with iris, violets, and heart's-ease, when she was seen, beloved, and kidnapped by Pluto, while she, a chaste and innocent young girl, tearing her robe in her excess of sorrow, wept as many tears for her lost flowers as for her threatened virginity.

After the lake, came the fields of the Læstrigoni-ans ; next Lentini, the ancient Leontinoi, where the inhabitants preserved the lion's skin given them by Heracles, as their device, when he founded their city ; then Augusta, built on the site of ancient Megara, — Augusta, of bloody, infamous memory, which cut the throats of three hundred blind soldiers returning from Egypt in 1799 ; then last, after Megara, we came to Thapsus, couchant in the sea :

“ Pantagiæ, Megarosque sinus, Thapsumque jacentem.”

As we pursued our voyage we were struck with the change of aspect of the coast. Instead of fertile fields gently sloping to the sea and covered with reeds that supplied a flute to Polyphemus and a shelter to the loves of Acis and Galatea, rose great cliffs from which flew thousands of pigeons as we passed them. Towards four in the afternoon a reef surmounted by a cross reminded passers of the wreck of certain vessels. At last, rounding the cape of

Santa Panagia, we saw the first lines of the walls of Siracusa and we entered her port to the noise of a school of drummer-boys doing their exercise. That was the first disillusion provided for us by the daughter of Archias the Corinthian.

Issuing from the island of Ortygia to build upon the mainland Achradina, Tyche, Neapolis, and Olympieum, Siracusa, after seeing the fall into ruins of each of her four daughters has now returned to her primitive cradle. To-day it is simply a town of less than two miles in circumference, containing one hundred and sixteen thousand souls, and surrounded by walls, bastions, and courtines, built by Charles V. In the days of Strabo it had a hundred and twenty thousand inhabitants, about as many as the modern city, with a circumference of one hundred and eighty *stadia* — 60 miles. Then, as its population increased and its walls and its five towns could no longer contain it, it founded Acræ, Casmenæ, Camarina, and Henna.

In the days of Cicero, fallen as he found it from its ancient prosperity, here is what it still was to his eyes :

“Siracusa is built in a situation at once strong and pleasant. The town can be reached easily from all sides, whether by land or sea ; her harbours, inclosed as it were, in the circle of her walls, have many entrances, but these harbours are all connected with one another. A part separated by this junction forms an island : this island is inclosed in the city, which is so vast that we may really say it is one city, but composed of four large towns. On the island is

the palace of Achron, which the money-lenders use : here also rise, among other temples, those of Diana and Minerva, which are the most remarkable. At the extremity of this island is a spring of water, named Arethusa, of surprising size, rich in fish, which would be invaded by the sea without a dike that protects it. The second city is Achradina, where is a great public square, with beautiful porticos, a prytaneum rich in ornament, a very large edifice that serves as a place of meeting in which to treat of public affairs, and a magnificent temple dedicated to Jupiter Olympius. The third city is Tyche ; it received its name from a temple of Fortune that formerly existed. It incloses a very vast space for exercises of the body, and several temples. This quarter of Siracusa is very populous. Finally, the fourth city is named Neapolis. At the upper part of this city is a very large theatre ; besides which, it possesses two noble temples, the temple of Ceres and the temple of Proserpine ; one may also remark there a statue of Apollo that is very fine."

That was the Siracusa of Cicero, such as the wars of Athens, Carthage, and Rome had made her ; such as the depredations of Verres had left her. But the old Siracusa, the Siracusa of Hiero and Dionysius, the veritable Pentapolis, was very differently beautiful, very differently rich, very differently splendid. That city had a circumference of twenty-four miles ; she had a population of one million two hundred thousand inhabitants, whose excessive wealth became proverbial, so that it was said of any man who boasted of his wealth : " He has not a tithe of that possessed by a Siracusan."

Siracusa, *that* Siracusa, had an army of one hundred thousand men and ten thousand horses distributed within her walls; she had six hundred vessels ploughing the seas from the straits of Gades to Tyre, and from Carthage to Marseilles. She had three harbours open to all the navies of the world: Trogilus, overlooked by the walls of Achradina, which was skirted by the road leading from Ortygia to Catania; the Great Harbour, the *Sicanum sinus* of Virgil, which contained one hundred and twenty vessels; the Little Harbour, *portus mamoreus*, which Hiero surrounded with palaces and Dionysius paved; besides which, so that Siracusa might have no cause to envy other cities, she had Athens for rival, Carthage for ally, Rome for enemy, Archimedes for defender, Dionysius for ruler, and Timoleon for deliverer.

At six o'clock we set foot ashore on Ortygia. They made us go through endless port formalities, by which we lost a full half-hour, so that once arrived in Siracusa we had time only to look for a hotel, dine, and go to bed, postponing all visits till the morrow. I had a letter to a young man of whom the friend who introduced me said marvels. This was the Conte di Gargallo, son of the Marchese di Gargallo, to whom Naples owes the finest translation of Horace made in Italy. The count was, my friend told me, witty as a Frenchman and hospitable as an old Siracusan, — praise that seemed to me exaggerated until I saw the count, and inadequate after I knew him.

At eight in the morning I presented myself at his house. He was still in bed. They took my friend's letter and my card up to him. He jumped out of

bed, ran to me, and held out his hand with such cordiality that from that moment I felt we were friends forever. He had never, at this time, been in Paris, yet he spoke French as though he were born and bred in Touraine, and knew our literature as a man who had made a special study of it. At the first words he said, the first gesture he made, he reminded me, in accent, mind, and ways of my dear good Méry, whom he had never seen, and knew only by name.

The count put his house, carriage, and person at our service. We declined with thanks the first offer and accepted the two others. It was agreed that to give some order to our investigations we should begin with Ortygia, which, as I have said, is now the only Siracusa; after which we would visit successively the sites of Neapolis, Achradina, Tyche, and Olympieum.

Our first visit was to the Museum, a modern creation of some twenty-five years' standing. Naples has a way of taking all the best it can find in Sicily; nevertheless there remains in the Museum a noble statue of Æsculapius, and the famous Venus Callipyge of which Athenæus speaks. The statue of the goddess seemed to me worthy of its reputation.

From the Museum we went to the site of the ancient temple of Artemis, the most ancient Greek building in Siracusa. The city owed a temple to that goddess, for Ortygia belongs to her. She obtained it from Zeus when he divided Sicily between Pallas, Persephone, and herself; and she had given it its name in memory of the wood of Ortygia at Delos, where she was born; consequently, a festival of three days was held in Siracusa in her honour. It was

during one of these festivals that the Romans, checked for three years by the genius of Archimedes, seized the city. Two Doric columns, encased in a partition wall of the strada Trabochetto, are all that remain of this temple.

The temple of Pallas, converted into a cathedral in the 12th century, is better preserved than that of her half-sister, and no doubt owes its preservation to the transformation it has undergone; the columns left standing are Doric, fluted, and projecting on the exterior of the wall that unites them; they incline to one side since the earthquake of 1542.

I reserved my visit to the fountain of Arethusa for the last. The fountain of Arethusa is, for every poet, an old school friend: Virgil invokes her in his tenth Eclogue, addressed to his friend Gallus. Ovid relates certain things that do the highest honour to the morality of the nymph. It is true that he puts the tale into the mouth of the nymph herself, who, like other writers of memoirs, may have painted her portrait at half-length only. However that may be, here is what public rumour says of her:

Arethusa was one of the most beautiful and bashful of the nymphs of Artemis. A huntress, like the daughter of Latona, she passed her time in the woods, chasing the deer, and modestly ashamed of her beauty, which would have been the glory of other women. One day, after hunting a roebuck, she ran out, dishevelled and breathless, from the forest of Stymphale, and saw before her a little stream, so pure, so calm, so gently flowing, that although it was several feet deep its gravelly bottom



was plainly seen. The nymph was warm ; she began by dabbling her pretty bare feet in the water ; then she went in to her knees ; then, wooed by the solitude, she unfastened the hook of her tunic, laid the chaste garment on a willow, and plunged into the brook. But hardly was she there before she felt the water quivering with love and caressing her as though it had a soul. At first Arethusa, certain of being alone, paid little heed to the matter ; but presently, thinking she heard a noise, she ran to the bank ; unfortunately, the shy nymph was so troubled in mind that, instead of the bank whereon lay her tunic, she mistook the way and landed on the opposite shore. She was scarcely there before the handsome head of a young man rose in the midst of the current ; he shook his damp curls, and said, looking at her with loving eyes : “ Where goest thou, Arethusa ? Beautiful Arethusa, where goest thou ? ”

Perhaps any other nymph would have paused at that sweet look and that soft voice ; but Arethusa was a timorous virgin, who, accompanying Artemis in the daytime only, had never seen the prudish murderess of Actæon turn human at night for the handsome shepherd of the Caraiæ. So, instead of stopping, she took to flight, all naked and dripping as she was. On his side, Alpheus, that was the young man’s name, made but one bound from his stream to the shore and started in pursuit, naked and dripping like herself. Thus they ran, he not catching her, past Orchomene, Psophis, Monte Cyl-lena, the Erymanthus, and all the countries adjacent to Elis ; bounding through ploughed lands, forests,

over rocks and mountains, the lover not gaining one step upon the nymph. But at last, when evening came, the beauteous fugitive knew but too well that her strength was failing ; soon she heard the steps of the god coming nearer ; then, as the sun went down, she saw his shadow touching hers, she felt an ardent breath upon her shoulders. She knew she could run no longer, she must be caught ; and she cried out as she ran : “ To me ! to me ! divine huntress ! save me ! Remember me whom thou thoughtest worthy to bear thy bow and arrows ! Artemis ! goddess of chastity, have pity upon me ! ”

As she said the words she saw herself wrapped in a cloud. Alpheus, in the act of catching her, lost her from sight. But instead of departing discouraged, he obstinately remained where he was. So when the cloud dispersed no nymph was there, only a running brook ; Arethusa was metamorphosed into a stream !

Then Alpheus became once more a river, a river god, and changed his course to mingle his waters with those of Arethusa. But Artemis, protecting her nymph, opened before her feet a subterranean way. Arethusa took it, her streamlet ran beneath the waters of the Mediterranean and came to the surface in Ortygia. Alpheus, on his side, when he saw the trick, plunged in not far from the Olympium, still pursuing his mistress, and coming to the surface in the harbour of Siracusa, not two hundred feet away from her.

Arethusa always maintained that she did not meet the god on her submarine journey ; but in spite of

the protestations of the poor nymph it must be owned that so close a neighbourhood seems slightly compromising. In fact, ever since those days, whenever Arethusa's chastity is mentioned before Poseidon and Amphitrite, that august couple smile as if they knew more than they choose to tell about the passage of the river and the streamlet through their liquid kingdom. However that may be, we were not less eager to be presented to her. They took us to a dirty washing-pool, where a score of washerwomen, their sleeves rolled up to their armpits and their gowns nearly up to their knees, were wringing the shirts of the Syracusans. "There," they told us, "is the fountain of Arethusa." It was not worth while to be so prudish to end in that way.

We were curious, nevertheless, to taste this miraculous water; I took a glass and plunged it in the place where the streamlet filters through the rock; to the eye it is clear and limpid, but a little salt to the taste, — another proof against the poor nymph, which leads us to think that she may not, as Ausonius says, have held out against the pure kisses of her lover: *incorruptarum miscentes oscula aquarum*.

A few steps from Arethusa's fountain rose the palace of Verres, the ruins of which served to build a Norman fort in the 11th century; this fort stands on the spot where was once the rock of Dionysius, razed by Timoleon.

Opposite, and on the other side of the opening of the Great Harbour rose the ancient Plemmyrion, the fortress built by Archimedes. Four animals in bronze, a bull, a lion, a goat, an eagle, adorned the four

corners, each turned towards one of the cardinal points. When the wind blew it entered the jaws or the beak of the animal facing it and made it utter the cry that belonged to its kind. It was this *æolic* masterpiece which, it is said, made Rome so jealous of Syracuse.

We re-crossed the whole town to visit Neapolis, but there we were obliged to leave our carriage, the ancient pavement that still retains the ruts of the old chariot-wheels being most uncomfortable for modern vehicles.

We skirted the Marble, or Little, Harbour, having to our right the sea, and to our left a few ruins. It was in this harbour, the most precious jewel of Siracusa, that the fleet of the Republic lay. Xenagoras built there the first galley with six rows of oars, and Archimedes constructed the marvellous vessel that Hiero II. sent to Ptolemy, King of Egypt ; which, if we believe Athenæus, had twenty rows of oars, and contained baths, a library, a temple, gardens, piscine, and festal hall.

The road we followed took us straight to the convent of the Capuchins. After a walk of half an hour we reached the abode of the good fathers and were ushered in by two monks whom we had met on the way, talking with them as we walked along. The convent was kept with an admirable cleanliness that contrasted with the frightful filth of the town, the sight of which had pursued us since our entrance into Sicily. This cleanliness strengthened Jadin in a scheme he had thought of for some time ; namely, to put himself to board in a convent for a

week, to work at his ease, while examining the interior life of a monastery. He asked the good fathers, through the Conte di Gargallo, if they would be willing to receive him for eight days ; they replied that they would do so with great pleasure, and they fixed the price for lodging and food at forty sous a day. Jadin was in ecstasy at such an arrangement, when the count whispered to him to await the dinner hour before making any engagement. Jadin asked if the dinner would not be plentiful enough to fill a worldly stomach. The count replied that, on the contrary, the Capuchins were thought to have splendid repasts, and above all, very varied ones, but that there might be an obstacle in the preliminary preparations.

At the moment when we reached the gate we had found it surrounded by beggars. It was the hour at which the Capuchins daily distributed soup to the poor, and over a hundred of them, men, women, and children, awaited this moment with mouths half open and burning eyes, like hounds awaiting their quarry.

I have not yet spoken of the Sicilian beggar, the occasion not having presented itself ; and yet it is impossible to pass in silence a class of persons who form at least one tenth of the population. Whoso has not seen the Sicilian beggar knows nothing of poverty. The French beggar is a prince, the Roman beggar a great seigneur, the Neapolitan beggar a worthy bourgeois, in comparison with the Sicilian beggar. The pauper of Jacques Callot with his mass of rags, the Egyptian fellah in his simple shirt would

seem men of property at Palermo or Siracusa. At Siracusa and Palermo poverty is seen in all its hideousness, with fleshless, feeble limbs, and cavernous, feverish eyes. It is hunger, with its cries of suffering, with its eternal death-rattle — hunger, that triples the years on the faces of the young girls; hunger, that makes the young Sicilian maiden, at an age when in all lands all women are beautiful, with youth at least, seem falling into decrepitude; hunger, more cruel, more implacable, more deadly than debauchery, that blasts and withers like debauchery, without affording the gross and sensual comfort of its rival in destruction.

All the persons in that crowd had eaten nothing since the day before; then they had come to receive, as they did to-day, as they would to-morrow, their porringer of soup. That soup was all their nourishment for twenty-four hours, unless some among them might obtain a few farthings from the compassion of their compatriots or the pity of foreigners — but such luck is almost unheard-of; the Sicilians are familiarized with poverty, and foreigners are few.

When the distributor of that blessed soup appeared, strange howls were heard and each beggar rushed towards him utensil in hand; some were too weak to howl and rush, and these dragged themselves moaning on their hands and knees.

In the soup were scraps of the meat that served to make it, which the cook had cut into little pieces so that the greater number might get a scrap. Those to whom this good luck fell uttered roars of joy, and retired to a corner ready to defend their prize if

others, less well treated by luck, tried to take it from them.

I saw, in the midst of all this, a child clothed, not in a shirt, but in a species of spider's web, so many were its holes; he had no porringer and was crying with hunger. He held out his poor little shrunken hands joined together to serve as best they could for the lacking cup. The cook poured into them a spoonful of the soup. It was boiling, and it scalded the poor child's hands; he gave a cry of pain and opened his fingers against his will; the broth and a bit of meat fell upon the pavement, and the child, throwing himself on all-fours, lapped it up like a dog.

"If these good fathers omitted the distribution for a time," I said to the count, who was beside me, "what would these unfortunates do?"

"They would die," he answered.

We left two piastres with one of the brethren to be converted into farthings for distribution to the poor wretches; then we fled.

The garden of the Capuchins extends over the site of the ancient *latomias* or quarries. It was from these quarries that ancient Siracusa, its walls, temples, and palaces issued. We went down by steps to a depth of fifty feet or more, passing under a huge bridge, beyond which we came upon a modern tomb. It was that of a young American named Nicholson, who was killed in a duel at Syracuse. As a heretic, and also because of the manner of his death the doors of all the churches were closed against him. Not less hospitable to the dead than to the living, the good

Capuchins took the body and gave it burial in their own garden.

These gardens, like those of the Benedictines at Catania, are miracles of art and patience. At Catania the lava had to be covered by hand; here, the rock. The task was the same and was fulfilled with wonderful courage. The deepest of the eleven quarries, called to-day the *Latomia del Paradiso*, once a labyrinth of stone where not an herb could grow, has now a wealth of orange and lemon trees and cactus. Its gigantic walls, one hundred and thirty feet down from the level ground, are covered with espaliers below and draped with vines above, while from the smallest crevices aloes expand their powerful leaves and shoot up their centenary bloom.

It was in these *latomias* that the seven thousand Athenian prisoners were confined after the defeat of Nicias. They were so crowded in these horrible death-pits that an epidemic broke out among them, and the Siracusans, fearing contagion, sold them as slaves, releasing a few whom they heard reciting from memory the verses of Euripides. Among those released was the famous philosopher who, on hearing read to him certain verses of Dionysius, made the request, now become proverbial: "Send me back to the quarries." In Sicily no tradition is ever lost, be it 3000 years old; that quarry is still called the *Latomia of Philoxenes*.

In the centre of each quarry (the heavens forming its roof) rises a species of column, solitary, rough-hewn, capriciously twisted. At the top of these columns, which reached to the level of the plain, were

stationed sentinels who watched the prisoners and passed down their food in baskets by means of a rope.

We traversed in every direction this strange labyrinth, with its ancient aqueducts that still bring water as in the days of Hiero and Dionysius; with its cascades of verdure, that seem to fall from the very tops of the inclosing walls, their rich waves undulating to the slightest breeze; with its old illegible inscriptions, that travellers strive to decipher as a homage to Euripides-Sauveur. It is in these quarries that we find the famous grotto called the Ear of Dionysius, hewn in the rock, which possesses to this day the most extraordinary acoustic qualities. I don't know what relationship existed between King Dionysius and King Midas, but I am sorry for the former to say that the grotto that bears the name of his aural apparatus bears also a close resemblance to the form of ears that the King of Phrygia received from Apollo's munificence.

Whoever it was that gave to this grotto hewn in the rock (for it is cut and polished with too much care into its strange form to be thought a work of nature) — whoever it was, I say, who gave a form and name to it, the fact exists that it has the faculty of transmitting the slightest sound made in its interior to a sort of little cave scooped out at its upper end. This secret cave is supposed to have been the resort of Dionysius the tyrant, who gave himself up to the study of acoustics and listened there for the complaints, threats, and projects of vengeance uttered by his prisoners. Unless a traveller is willing to incur the

sovereign contempt of his guide, I advise him to express no doubt of this historic truth.

The Ear of Dionysius is hollowed in the rock in the form of the letter S ; it is two hundred and ten feet deep, seventy-five feet in height, and thirty-five feet wide at its opening, contracting to fifteen feet as it goes up ; to my thinking it made conspiracy the easiest thing in the world in Syracuse. Conspirators had only to await the moment when the tyrant entered his study and then draw up the ladder. I took, I must admit, a very poor opinion of the ancient inhabitants of Syracuse, when I had read all their authors and found that the above idea had never once occurred to any of them.

Our guide proposed to us to verify for ourselves the truth of what he had told us as to the transmission of sound. At the first words he said, and before we had replied either yes or no, three or four young rascals, whose business it evidently was to watch for strangers adventuring on their domain, started up to prepare the means of ascension. In ten minutes' time two of them lowered a rope from the summit of the rock ; to this a pulley was immediately attached, a seat was fastened to the rope and one of the two young fellows being seated in it was drawn up by the three others, to familiarize us by example with this singular method of locomotion.

As the example, attractive as it was meant to be, did not have the expected power of attraction upon us (though we each desired that the experiment should be made by the other), we drew lots as to who should have the honour of being swung up to the Tyrant's

aerial cell. Fate favoured Jadin ; he made a grimace that showed he did not appreciate his luck, but nevertheless he bravely took his seat upon the perch. Scarcely there, and as if our guides were afraid he might reverse his decision, he rose majestically into the air, where he presently began to turn round and round like a ball of thread when we try to unwind it. Milord emitted a howl when he saw his master taking a route he could not follow ; and as for me, I own I watched him with some anxiety until I saw him safely and comfortably lodged in his pigeon-hole. Then, reassured by Jadin himself, I entered the quarry to carry out the experiment.

The grotto descends in winding, somewhat in the shape of an ear, to a depth of two hundred and ten feet or thereabouts. Iron rings attached in places to the stone were long supposed to have been used to chain prisoners, but the Abbé Capodicci proved that these rings were modern and probably used to fasten horses. This, however, did not prevent our guide, who was not of the abbé's opinion, from explaining their use as instruments of torture. I did not wish to contradict him for such a trifle as that, so I was very pitying over the fate of the poor wretches so uncomfortably riveted to the wall.

When we reached the extreme lower end of the grotto the guide requested me to say something in the lowest voice I could use, but still intelligibly, so that Jadin, whose ear would be applied to the precious little hole of the Tyrant, would hear distinctly what I said. On which I requested Jadin in a whisper to strike a match and light his cigar.

After giving him time to conform to that request, the execution of which would be a proof that he had heard me, I tore apart a sheet of paper; then our guide, keeping his own experiment for the last, fired a pistol, the noise of which, by the same acoustic effect, was to seem to Jadin like the roar of cannon. Then we ran back to the upper extremity of the grotto, and there was Jadin smoking his cigar, hopping on one foot, and rubbing his ears. He had heard my words and the tearing of the paper perfectly. As for the pistol-shot, which was quite unexpected, it had made him stone-deaf in the right ear. Our guide was triumphant. Jadin descended in the same way by which he had gone up, without other damage than his deafness, which lasted for the rest of the day.

After a visit to the so-called tomb of Archimedes, we took our way towards the Greek theatre, driving before us myriads of lizards of all colours, the sole modern inhabitants of the old city of Neapolis. The theatre, one of the most interesting relics in Syracuse was built by the Greeks, — at what period remains unknown. The following inscription cut into a stone, ΒΑΣΙΛΙΣΣΑΕ ΦΙΛΙΣΤΙΔΟΣ, set *savants* on the scent, and made them decide, with their usual certainty, that it dated from the reign of Queen Philistis. But, having reached that discovery, the learned men found themselves balked, history making no mention of the said queen, and chronology, from Archias to Hiero II., offering not the slightest chink into which could be inserted a feminine reign. So the two Greek words above quoted are the despair of Sicilian

savants ; if they become excited on any subject, you have only to whisper those words distinctly, and down go their ears, they sigh profoundly, take their hats and depart.¹

However this may be, there is the theatre ; it exists ; *that* cannot be denied ; it is the very same where Gelon called together the people in arms, and went, alone and unarmed, to render an account of his administration. There, Agathocles assembled the Siracusans after the murder of the chief men of the city ; and Timoleon, old and blind, came there often, so says Plutarch, to sustain, by the counsels of his genius, the people he had delivered by the strength of his arm. Nothing can be more picturesque than this wonderful ruin ; the view is magnificent. Jadin stopped there to make a sketch ; I helped him to set up his establishment and then left

¹ The names of Hiero I., Philistis, supposed to have been the wife of Hiero II., and Nereis, the wife of his son Gelon, are cut upon their seats ; and history, not fable, records that Æschylus sat beside the first Hiero to witness the performance of his "Persians." Pindar too "came cleaving the blue Ionian seas" to sit there in turn and listen to his Ode in honour of Hiero's victory in the Olympian games, — Ætna, "pillar of heaven," looking from afar upon the scene. Both Hieros were learned men ; lovers of art and poesy, but men of vigour too. The reign of the first (478–467 B. C.) was glorified by the poets above-named, also by Simonides, Bacchylides, and others ; that of the second Hiero (275–210 B. C.) could boast of Archimedes and Theocritus. It is true that some doubt exists as to whose wife Queen Philistis really was ; but that she lived then, and still lives, in bodily shape, we know by one of the most exquisite Greek coins that we now possess. The best authority on Sicily in compact form is Murray's guide-book, written by Mr. George Dennis, — now, unfortunately, out of print. — Tr.

him, to continue my walk, promising to stop and pick him up on my return.

I followed the road from Siracusa to Catania which separates Achradina from Tyche. The houses were built without foundations, stone standing on rock, that was all; I could still follow their outlines, though with some difficulty. The streets were much easier to recognize; the ruts worn by the chariot-wheels served as conducting lines, and directed the eye with certainty. Besides the ruined houses and the rut-worn streets, the ground is also hollowed by irregular holes, which must have been wells, cisterns, *piscine*, baths, and aqueducts.

When I reached the Scala Pupaglio, instead of turning down to the Portus Trogilus I took my way up to the Epipolæ, following the remains of the old wall which Dionysius the elder built in twenty days, with 6000 yoke of oxen and 60,000 men, over a distance 30 *stadia* — $3\frac{1}{2}$ miles.

The Epipolæ, as its name indicates, was a fortress at the summit of a hill overlooking the four quarters of Siracusa. The date of its foundation is unknown; certain it is that it existed in the days of the Peloponnesian wars. The Athenians, led by Nicias, seized it and made it their base of supplies, though they were soon driven away by their old enemies the Spartans, who had now crossed the seas to come to the help of the Siracusans. After the expulsion of the Tyrants Dionysius seized the site, added to the fortifications, and built the wall in a curve round Achradina from the harbour of Trogilus to the Great Harbour.

I stood upon the summit of the Epipolæ, now enriched by a telegraph, which at the moment was resting with an air of idleness delightful to see, in spite of the multiplied signals of its telegraphic correspondent. I opened the door gently and found the officials all tranquilly asleep, which accounted, no doubt, for the immobility of their instrument. I took good care not to waken them.¹

From the heights of the Epipolæ, and turning my back to the sea, I overlooked, on the right, the plain where Marcellus camped, and on the left, the whole course of the Anapus. As it was now nearly midday, — the sun being in its zenith, and literally bathing me in a heat of 40 degrees, reflected from the pavements of Tyche, — I thought it was time to pick up Jadin and return with him to Syracuse. To my great astonishment on reaching the theatre I found only his seat, without blocks or umbrella. I was beginning to fear lest he might have been the victim of some murderous assault when I spied him astride of the largest branch of a splendid fig-tree which gave him both shade and food. I went to him and remarked that the miller to whom the tree belonged might think the liberty he was taking rather strange; but Jadin answered proudly that he was on his own property, and that he had bought for the sum of ten farthings the right to eat figs at

¹ It is not pedantic for any one to take Thucydides, in the original or translated, and, sitting on the Epipolæ, follow with the eye his narrative of the great sea and land struggle of the Athenians under Nicias and the Siracusans; the whole scene lies there still, — the scene of the struggle that was fatal to Greece. — TR.

his discretion, and even to fill his pockets with them. The bargain seemed to me a poor one for the miller, Jadin's jacket containing, to my knowledge, eleven pockets of varying sizes.

We returned to the city at top speed, soaked as though we had plunged into all the three harbours of Syracuse. The metamorphoses of Arethusa and Cyane into fountains were explained to me; one hour more of that delicious sun and I, too, should have passed into a fluid condition.

The Conte di Gargallo had remained behind to organize an excursion by boat on the Anapus. At first I offered, with all the pride and ostentation of a proprietor, to provide the boat of the speronara and two sailors; but the boatmen of Syracuse, like the Swiss guides, have privileges that all travellers must respect. We found on our return that the count, foreseeing, from the great heat, that we should be little inclined to start at once, had ordered the boat to be in readiness at three o'clock; which left us half an hour for a bath, and an hour and a half for a siesta; so when the boatmen came to tell us all was ready, we were fresh and lively as if we had not quitted our beds since the evening before.

We embarked in the Great Harbour. That was the scene of the famous naval battle between the Athenians and Siracusans in which the Athenians had twenty vessels burned and sixty sunk. Ten or twelve little boats of the size of the one we were in now compose the whole navy of Syracuse.

Our first visit was to the river Alpheus; honour to whom honour is due. The river Alpheus, as I

have already said, disappeared at Olympeium and reappeared in the Great Harbour not two hundred feet from the fountain of Arethusa; the boiling of its waters is still visible on the surface of the sea, and it is said that if you dip a bottle to a certain depth it will fill with fresh water which is perfectly good to drink. Unfortunately we could not verify the fact; an empty bottle lacking for the experiment.

We next struck across the harbour in a straight line to the mouth of the Anapus, another river which is not without a certain mythological distinction, though it is better known through the rivulet Cyane, which it married, than for itself. In fact, the rivulet Cyane, which joins Anapus about a mile from its mouth, is all that there is of most distinguished in the aristocracy of nymphs, naiads, and hamadryads. It is not known exactly who were her father and mother, but it is an undoubted fact that she was cousin to that other Cyane, daughter of the river Meander, who was changed to a rock because she would not listen to a beautiful young man who loved her passionately and killed himself in her presence without his death causing her the slightest emotion. Let me hasten to say that her cousin was not of so hard a nature; so she was changed into a fountain, which was formerly the metamorphosis used for all sensitive souls. Here is how that memorable change occurred; I will not give it in my own language, but in that of Monsieur Renouard, the translator of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. This passage, written in 1628, will give an idea of the manner in which antiquity was understood in the reign of Louis XIII.,

surnamed the Just — not, as might be supposed, because he put to death Marsillac, Bouteville, Cinq-Mars, de Thou, and de Montmorency, but merely because he was born under the sign of the Scales.

Pluto has just abducted Persephone and is bearing her in his chariot, he does not well know where; at last he arrives in the neighbourhood of Ortygia. Now for the translator:

“Here lived Cyane, the most renowned nymph that was then in Sicily, who has left in that land her name to waters that still bear it. She rose above the water-line to her stomach, and recognizing Persephone, came forward to help her. ‘You shall not go farther,’ she said to Pluto. ‘Why do you seek to be the son-in-law of Demeter by force? Her daughter deserves to be won by gentle speeches, and not abducted. To win her, you should entreat her and not force her. As for me, I tell you truly — if I may put my lowness in comparison with her grandeur — that I once was loved by the river Anapus, but he did not have me in the marriage way. He sought my friendship long, and did not enjoy my body until he had first acquired my will.’ Making these remonstrances Cyane stretched her arms to right and left as far as she could, to prevent the chariot from passing on; then Pluto, irritated, struck his trident, sceptre of his empire, with such force upon the ground that the earth split and made an opening for his dreadful horses, down which they went incontinently to the gloomy Palace of Shades with the prey they drew. Cyane’s heart was so broken, both because she saw Persephone abducted and because she was

so contemptuously treated herself, that she conceived a mourning in her heart which could not be consoled. Feeding with tears her secret woe, she consumed her body until it melted away and turned into the very stream of which she had been the tutelary goddess. Little by little, her limbs were seen to soften, her bones lost their hardness and became pliable; so did her nails, all the weaker limbs, also the hair, the fingers, the feet, the thighs became, first liquid — for a body the less heavy it is the more quickly it changes to water — then the shoulders, loins, sides, and stomach flowed in streams; till at last the corrupted veins were full of water in place of blood, and of all her body nothing was left that could be held by the hand.”

This translation had the greatest success at the Hôtel de Rambouillet. Mademoiselle de Scudéry thought the passage I have quoted a masterly thing; Chapelain delighted in it; and Mademoiselle Paulet turned herself into a fountain every time the passage was read before her.

The marriage of Anapus and Cyane was happy, if we may believe appearances, for the banks of the bed where they flow together are ravishing; true walls of verdure, bending over to each other to form an arch both cool and shady. Here grows the papyrus, a gift from Ptolemy Philadelphus to Hiero II., a plant that has now died out of its native Egypt but still flourishes on the banks where King Hiero placed it. From time to time we came to vistas that seemed as if cut by art, but were really mere accidents of nature, allowing us to see upon the left bank the ruins of

the Epipolæ and on the right those of the Olympæum, the famous temple of Zeus, built by Gelon; the sole remains of which is a pair of columns. It was in this temple that the statue of the god stood covered with a golden mantle which Dionysius the elder appropriated on the ground that the garment was "too heavy for summer and too cold for winter." Verres, amateur of art, admired the statue the more for the absence of the golden cloak, and sent it to Rome. It was one of the three most beautiful statues of antiquity, the two others being, as is well known, the Venus Callipyge and the Apollo.

Nearly opposite to these columns we passed beneath a bridge of a single arch over the Anapus; and a few yards farther on we came to the junction of the river and the brook. Then, in a spirit of gallantry we left the river to our right and continued our way upon the brook Cyane.

Nothing more charming than the twists and turns of the graceful stream between its banks of waving papyrus, that king of reeds! Sometimes we came to delicious little pools, so clear that we saw their bottom; sometimes to rapid currents, complaining, as if the voice of the nymph herself were telling Ovid of her sad metamorphosis; or again, to tiny islands the home of aquatic birds, who flew away at our approach or plunged among the reeds, where we could follow their flight by the movement they gave to that forest of flexible stems. Thus we went on for nearly an hour till we came to the fountain of Cyane, a clear translucent pool one hundred feet in circumference. Here it was that Pluto struck the

earth with his trident and disappeared into Hell. So it is said that this pool is an abyss without a bottom. The people of the region call it Lapisma. It was around this spring that the Siracusans held yearly festivals in honour of Persephone, sacrificing a black bull to her manes; and as I stood up in the boat to drag from its depths a root of Ptolemy's papyrus (which afterwards flourished for years in my garden) a black bull pushed his head through the feathery branches and nodded, as if to say, "Times are better now."

On our way back, Count Gargallo ordered the boatmen to stop a moment in a delicious retreat shaded on all sides by huge tufts of papyrus, their fringed heads waving softly to the slightest breeze. It is here, tradition says, that the scene of the sisters Callipyge took place.

The sisters Callipyge were, as everybody knows, Siracusans. They were not only the two richest heiresses of the city, but they were also the handsomest women that could be seen from Megara to Cape Pachinum. Among the gifts that liberal Nature had been pleased to bestow upon them was that richness of shape from which their name is derived. One day, as the sisters were bathing together at the place where we now were, they began to dispute as to which of the two was the handsomer. The case was hard to decide by the interested parties themselves; so they called to a shepherd who was feeding his flock on the shore. The shepherd did not need a second call; he ran up at once, and the sisters, issuing from the water in their dazzling nudity, told him

to judge the question. The second Paris gazed for a long time undecided, turning his ardent eyes from one to the other ; finally, he decided for the eldest. Delighted with his judgment, the fair nymph offered him her hand and heart, which the swain, as will readily be believed, accepted gratefully. As for the younger, she made the same offer to the brother of the judge, who happened to come by at the moment the judgment was given and declared it to be false. The four young people then built a temple to Beauty, and as each pair continued to hold their own opinion, the rivals decided to appeal to posterity ; they caused the two best sculptors of the time to make the two Aphrodites that still bear their name ; one is in Naples, the other in Syracuse. Two thousand three hundred years have elapsed since that period, and posterity, undecided, has not yet given its judgment. • *Adhuc sub judice lis est*, says Horace.

Happy days, when shepherds espoused princesses !
And such princesses ! Ah !

VII

DEATH IN LIFE. A LIVING TOMB

MY guide to the Epipolæ had pointed out to me, close to the river Anapus, a little Gothic chapel which he asked me to visit, inasmuch as it had been the scene, about forty years earlier, of a terrible history which still occupies the minds of the people of the neighbourhood. I replied that I saw the chapel perfectly from the spot where we then were (the height of the Epipolæ) and as the day was intensely hot I would content myself with hearing its history, which I asked him to relate. He said it was rather long, but eminently interesting, and he proved his words by telling me in substance the following facts :

The chapel belonged to the San Floridio family, one of the oldest and most distinguished in Sicily. Built by an ancestor of the present marquis, it was chiefly used as the family sepulchre. An old tradition had long been handed down respecting this chapel, which contained, it was said, not only the mortuary vaults, but also certain subterranean cellars, in which a Marchese di San Floridio had taken refuge during the Spanish invasion, and where, tradition added, he remained for ten years, regularly fed by his old servants, who, at the risk of their lives,

carried food and drink to him on stated days. A score of times he might have escaped, but he could never bring himself to quit Sicily, hoping always that the hour of her freedom would strike, and thinking that he then ought to be on the spot at the first signal.

In 1785 there were two male scions of the family : the Marquis and the Count di San Floridio. The marquis lived in Messina, the count in Syracuse. The marquis was a widower without children, and lived alone with only two servants, a young girl about eighteen or twenty years of age, named Teresa, the foster-sister of a daughter he had lost, and a man of over thirty by name Gaetano Cantarello, the last descendant of the faithful servants who had served their master in his subterranean abode, the secret of which was handed down in the Floridio family from father to son.

I have already given, apropos of Messina, an account of the earthquake of 1795. The Marchese di San Floridio was one of the victims of that sad event. His two servants, Teresa and Gaetano, escaped ; although Gaetano risked his life, it was said, by remaining an hour in the ruins of the house endeavouring to rescue his master. The Count di San Floridio, living in Syracuse, came into possession of his brother's wealth, which was immense, and the title of marquis.

Ten years had gone by since that event, and the Marchese di San Floridio, who had rebuilt his brother's wrecked palace, passed his summers in Messina and his winters in Syracuse. But he never failed to

have mass said for the soul of his deceased brother in the mortuary chapel of the family on the day and hour of his death, which was nine in the evening.

The tenth anniversary, in 1805, was about to be celebrated in the customary pomp, and with the addition of a new personage who plays a chief part in this history. I mean the young count, Don Ferdinando di San Floridio, who, having reached his eighteenth year, had just returned from the college of Palermo after finishing his studies.

Don Ferdinando (now the present marquis) knew well that he bore one of the noblest names and would inherit one of the largest fortunes in Sicily. His instincts were those of a true gentleman. He was a handsome youth, with hair black as ebony, black eyes, a Grecian nose, and teeth of enamel, carrying one hand on his hip, his hat a little tipped to one side, and apt to jest, after the fashion of the period, at sacred things; in other respects, an excellent horseman, strong on fencing, and swimming like a fish,—things that are all learned in the college of nobles. It was said, moreover, that to these classic studies the beautiful ladies of Palermo had added others for which Ferdinando showed no less taste than he did for those in which he was proficient, although these feminine lessons were not on the college curriculum. At any rate the count was now returning to Syracuse, young, handsome, brave, and just at the age when every man thinks himself destined to become the hero of some adventure.

This was how matters were when the anniversary of the death of the marquis arrived. The father

and mother of the young count informed him that he would have to take part in the mortuary service. Don Ferdinando, who did not haunt churches and was, in fact, decidedly Voltairean, would have liked to avoid this nuisance, but he felt that he could not decently hold back from a family duty, and that any reluctance towards an uncle from whom he inherited an income of a hundred thousand francs would be more than improper. So he yielded with fairly good grace under the circumstances, and having put his father and mother into their litter he jumped as gaily into his own as if he were merely going to figure in a quadrille.

A word here, in passing, on this charming Sicilian mode of travelling. The litter is a large *chaise à porteurs*, constructed generally for two persons, who, instead of being seated side by side, as in our modern coupés, sit facing each other as in the old-fashioned vis-à-vis. This litter is placed between two shafts or poles which are fixed to the backs of two mules. A servant leads one mule and the other is compelled to follow. It results that the motion of the litter, especially in so rough and broken a land as Sicily, resembles the pitching of a ship and causes the same sea-sickness. Consequently, the traveller usually holds in execration the person with whom he travels in this way. After an hour of such locomotion he squabbles with his best friend, and by the end of the first day they have quarrelled for life. Damon and Pythias, those classic models of friendship, had they travelled from Catania in a litter, would have fought a duel on arriving at Syracuse

and killed each other fraternally no less than did Eteocles and Polynices.

On arriving at the chapel the young count found, contrary to his expectation, absolutely no one present except the priest, the sacristan, and the choir-boys. He cast a rather sulky look about him, took two or three turns around the little church, and ended, finding the pavement too hard for his knees, by sitting down in the confessional, where, being prepared for slumber by the motion of the litter, he was soon fast asleep. He slept the sleep of eighteen ; neither fugue, nor organ, nor *De Profundis* woke him.

The service over, his mother looked for him on all sides, and even called to him in a low voice ; but the marquis, still sore and sour from his journey in the litter, told his wife that her son was a libertine, whom she spoiled by excessive maternal weakness, and that a church was certainly not the place in which to find him. So the marquise, accustomed to obey, got passively into the conjugal litter which started for home, followed by the empty machine, leaving the youth, by his father's orders, to get home as he could.

Meantime Ferdinando was sleeping, safe and sound, in his confessional, dreaming, perhaps, that Princess M . . . the prettiest woman in Palermo, was giving him a swimming lesson in the basin of *La Favorita*, and snoring joyously to that sweet illusion.

At two in the morning he woke, stretched his arms, yawned, rubbed his eyes, and thinking he was in bed, turned over and struck his head sharply against the corner of the confessional. The shock was so

rough that the young count opened his eyes wide and woke up thoroughly. At first he looked about him in amazement, having no idea of where he was ; little by little remembrance came to him, he recalled the circumstances of the night before and guessed the rest ; evidently his father and mother, not seeing him with them, had returned to Syracuse, little thinking that they left him behind them in the chapel. He went to the door and found it locked ; then he took out his watch, a repeater, and finding it half-past two in the morning, he reflected, very judiciously, that the gates of Syracuse would be closed, everybody asleep in his father's country-house, the Belvedere, and that, on the whole, though a confessional might not be as comfortable as his own bed, it was better than sleeping out under the stars. He returned therefore to his improvised alcove, shut his eyes, and endeavoured to resume the good sleep lately interrupted.

He was dropping, little by little, into that interior twilight that is neither the day nor yet the night of thought, when his hearing — the sense that is the last to go to sleep — transmitted to him vaguely the sound of an opening door, which, as it opened, creaked on its hinges. The count sat up instantly, cast his eyes around the church, and saw, by the light of a lantern carried in his hand, a man bending down before the altar of the side chapel that was nearest to the confessional. Almost immediately, the man rose, wrapped the mantle, half Italian, half Spanish, which the Sicilians call a *ferrajulo*, about him, blew out the lantern, and went softly down the whole

length of the little church, passing so close to the count that Ferdinando could have touched him with his hand, opened the door, disappeared, and relocked it behind him.

Ferdinando remained mute and motionless in his place, partly from fear, partly from surprise. Our young count was not one of those iron souls that we read of in novels, one of those heroes who, like Nelson, ask at fifteen what fear is. No, he was merely a brave, adventurous young fellow, superstitious as men are in Sicily; therefore, though at first he laid his hand on his sword to do battle with the apparition whatever it was, he was not sorry when it passed him evidently without seeing him. At first, he fancied he had to do with some disembodied being, perhaps an ancestor of his own, displeased at the partiality that gave an annual mass to the late marquis, and now issuing softly from his tomb to ask him for the same favour. But when the mysterious being raised the lantern to blow it out the gleam falling upon his face and figure showed the count a tall man forty to forty-five years of age, to whom a black beard and moustache and some inward preoccupation gave a stern and gloomy expression of countenance. He then knew that he had to do with a being of the same species though not of the same rank as his own.

Naturally, there was no further question of sleep for the young man; lost in a world of conjectures he passed the rest of the night with eye and ear on the watch, trying to find some solid base for the various edifices built up by his imagination. It was then

that he recalled the family tradition of a subterranean retreat in which a former Marchese di San Floridio, proscribed by the Spanish authorities and condemned to death, lived hidden for ten years ; but he knew that his late uncle, the head of the family, had died without bequeathing the secret of this cavern to any one. Nevertheless, this recollection, incomplete and incoherent as it was, cast a ray of light into the darkness around the subject ; the count bethought him that the secret which the present family believed had been buried in a grave might have been discovered accidentally by unknown persons. The first result of this new idea was to make him think of brigands, who possibly had made it their resort ; but presently he reflected that for quite a long time there had been no talk in the neighbourhood of any considerable robberies, or of any important murder.

While the young count was making and unmaking a thousand conjectures, time went on and the first rays of the dawn began to appear ; it then occurred to him that if he wished to fathom, later, this singular adventure he had better not let himself be seen in the neighbourhood of the chapel. He therefore clambered by the help of a few chairs to a window, opened it, let himself slip down outside, dropped without accident eight or ten feet, and reached Syracuse just as the doors were beginning to open. By means of a few piastres, he made the porter promise to tell the marquis and his mother that he returned the preceding night half an hour after they did.

Thanks to this precaution, matters turned out as

he wished ; and when he appeared at breakfast the marquis was so easily satisfied by his excuses that he saw he might proceed at once to carry out a plan he had resolved upon. Emboldened by his father's indulgence he spoke with apparent indifference of going to shoot in the Pantanelli. The marquis made no objection, and after breakfast the count, armed with his gun, followed by his dog, and furnished with the key of the chapel, started forth, promising his mother to bring her a dish of snipe for her dinner. He crossed the Pantanelli marshes to salve his conscience and muddy his gaiters and his dog, aimed at two or three snipe, which he missed, and reaching the chapel, went straight to the door, opened it, and locked it behind him without being seen. No wonder in that, for it was one hour after midday, and at one hour after midday no one in Sicily, unless he has been changed into a lizard, as Stellio was by Ceres, ever roams the fields.

He began by going straight to the confessional ; from there he turned his eyes to the altar before which he had seen the man in the cloak stooping down. Then he went to the altar and sought on all sides for some opening ; he found none. But on the right of the tabernacle his dog smelt the wall obstinately as if he had found a scent, and looked at his master with low and prolonged growls. Don Ferdinando, who knew the instinct of the faithful animal, felt certain that the mysterious man had passed through that portion of the wall ; but in vain did he search, he could find no traces of an opening ; and after an hour of useless effort he left the chapel,

hopeless of discovering by ordinary means the secret it evidently inclosed.

In returning, he again passed through the marshes and, being a good shot and less distracted in mind than earlier in the day, he soon had an honourable bagful of snipe, teal, and rail, — trophies which he deposited at the feet of his mother, declaring that he had had such good sport he meant, with his father's permission, to go and spend some days at Belvedere, and give himself up to the pleasures of the chase. The marquis, who was very accommodating whenever he was not about to go, or was going, or had gone in a litter, replied that he saw no objection ; the marquise endeavoured to make observations against that amusement ; but the marquis answered sharply that, on the contrary, sport was a pleasure essentially aristocratic and seemed to him marvellously well suited to a gentleman. Besides, in antiquity itself the chase was specially reserved to noblemen of the highest families : witness Meleager, son of Æneas and King of Calydon ; Heracles, son of Zeus and Semele ; and, above all, there was Apollo, son of Zeus and Latona, that is to say, of a god and goddess, who bore no stain on his paternal and maternal quarterings, so that he might even, like himself, Marchese di San Floridio, be a Knight of Malta. The marquis knew very well there was a wide difference between the serpent Python, the lion of Nemea, the wild-boar of Calydon, and snipe, rails, and teal ; but take it altogether, his son, brave as he was, could n't kill anything but what he met, and if by chance his dog should put up any sort of a monster it was very cer-

tain that Ferdinando would kill it. The poor mother could make no reply to so learned an harangue, so she contented herself with sighing, kissing her son, and begging him to be careful.

That same evening Ferdinando established himself in the country-house of the Marchese di San-Floridio, about five hundred steps from the Gothic chapel, which in point of fact belonged to it.

Whatever desire the young man had to renew his nocturnal experience, he was forced to await the morrow; he had to make acquaintance with the localities, obtain the key of the park gate, and ask for certain information in the neighbourhood.

These inquiries were without result. People remembered to have seen from time to time in the village of Belvedere a man answering the description given by the count, but no one knew his name or where he came from. The gardener of the château, however, entering eagerly into the young count's interest, promised to get more particulars regarding this unknown personage.

That night Ferdinando went alone through the park gate, armed with his sword and a pair of pistols, to the chapel, locked the door behind him, stationed himself in the confessional, like a soldier in a sentry-box, and watched till morning without seeing any apparition or any other event of the slightest interest.

The next night, the night after, and the fourth night the count renewed the experiment without obtaining any result. He began to believe he had dreamed, and that his dog had misled him by smelling rats. But in the course of the fifth day the

man in the cloak reappeared in the village, and the gardener set to work to obtain information. This, it must be owned, was very vague. The name of the man was unknown, but he was certainly very charitable, for each time that he came to Belvedere he gave liberal alms. He usually stopped at the house of a peasant named Rizzo. The gardener went to see this peasant and questioned all the family, but learned nothing beyond the fact that the man in the cloak had come to their house several times to ask the names and addresses of the poorest inhabitants of Belvedere. Often he had given them money to buy food of all kinds, such as bread, ham, fruits, which he distributed himself among the poor. Two or three times he was accompanied by a young lad wrapped in a cloak, who seemed very sad. The peasants fancied that this lad was a woman, and had joked the stranger on the subject; but he took the jest in bad part, and answered, in a tone that admitted of no reply, that the youth was a young priest, a relation of his, who could not get accustomed to life in the seminary, so he brought him now and then into the country to amuse him.

All this, far from lessening the young count's curiosity excited it the more, and on the following night he was at his post, but neither that night nor the next did he see anything of the man he was awaiting. At last, however, on the seventh night since that of their first encounter he heard the door turn on its hinges and then close; an instant later a lantern shone out suddenly, as if it had been lighted in the church. It passed, as before, the confessional,

and by its gleam Ferdinando recognized the man of the cloak. This man walked straight to the side altar, raised the lowest of its three steps, and took out something that Ferdinando could not see; then he approached the wall, appeared to insert a key in a lock, opened a secret door, which, being made between two pilasters, moved a whole section of the stones, closed the door behind him, and disappeared.

This time the count was wide-awake; no doubt here; this was not an illusion. The young man reflected as to what he had better do. If it had been broad daylight, if there had been witnesses to applaud his courage, if his feelings of pride had been excited in any way, he would have waited for the return of the man, marched straight at him sword in hand, and demanded an explanation of the mystery. But he was alone, it was dark, there was no one to praise the grand air with which he put himself on guard; consequently Count Ferdinando listened to the voice of prudence, and here is what prudence advised him to do:

The man had knelt before the altar, had raised a stone; from under that stone he had taken something; that something must be a key, since with it he had opened a door. No doubt in going away he would put the key in the place from which he had taken it. Plainly, what the young count had better do was to wait quietly until he was gone, take the key, open the door himself and enter the subterranean cavern.

The plan was so simple that it is no wonder that it occurred to Ferdinando's mind or that he fastened

upon it. This does not, however, prevent, as some adventurous imaginations may suppose, the young count from being a very brave and very chivalrous young man; only, as I have said, there was no one looking on, so prudence carried the day against pride.

He waited nearly two hours. Four o'clock in the morning had just struck when the mysterious door opened; the man in the cloak came out, lantern in hand, approached the altar, raised the stone, hid the key, replaced the step, passed once more within two feet of Ferdinando, blew out his lantern as before, and went out, locking the church door after him, and leaving the count alone in the church and well-nigh master of his secret.

Whatever impatience Ferdinando felt to carry on his adventure, not having taken the precaution to bring a lantern, he was forced to wait until daylight. However, each moment's delay gave time for the man in the cloak to go farther away and one chance the more to Ferdinando not to be surprised.

At the first rays of light he left the confessional, went to the altar, and raised the step; but at first he saw nothing that resembled what he sought. At last, in a little hole, he saw a wooden peg, which, as he took it up, let fall into his hand a small round key, like that of a piano. He examined it carefully, put the step back in its place, went to the wall, and guided this time by certainty, ended by discovering in the angle of the pilaster a small round hole, almost invisible on account of the shadow projected by the column. He introduced the key, and the

door turned on its hinges with a facility which its weight made surprising. He saw before him a dark corridor, the dampness of which came out to meet him and chilled him. Not a ray of light, not a sound of any kind.

Ferdinando stopped. It would have been too imprudent to venture unprepared into that vault; some open trap might cruelly punish the curiosity of a rash visitor. He reclosed the door, and, satisfied with this beginning of discovery, he returned to the château determined to bring a lantern the following night, and push his investigation to its end. He spent the whole day in a state of agitation we can easily comprehend. Again and again he questioned Peppino the gardener, as if he could tell him something more than he knew already. The worthy man could only repeat what he had said, adding however, that the man in the cloak had been seen in the village the night before; evidently he was the same man who had entered the chapel.

At ten o'clock Ferdinando left the château with a dark lantern; he was armed as before, with a sword and a pair of pistols. He entered the chapel without meeting any one on his way, raised the stone, found the key, unlocked the door, and saw before him the dark corridor. This time, armed with his lantern, he boldly entered it. Hardly had he gone twenty steps before he came to a stairway, and at the foot of that stairway was a locked door, for which he had no key. Irritated by this new obstacle, he shook the door violently to see if it would not yield. It remained firm, and the young count saw that with-

out a file and pincers the lock could not be forced. For an instant he thought of calling for assistance, but — the truth must be told — at the moment he was going to shout an involuntary shudder seized him, so mysterious and terrible did everything seem to him, even the sound of his own voice !

He therefore left the corridor slowly, closed the door behind him, replaced the key under the step, and went back to the château to obtain a file and pincers. On his way he met a man, whom he hardly distinguished in the darkness ; moreover, on perceiving him the man had crossed to the other side of the road, and when Ferdinando came near him, he turned sharply to the right and disappeared like a shadow among the papyrus and tall reeds that bordered the road. The count continued his way, not reflecting very much on this meeting, which was, after all, not unusual ; for in all parts of Sicily there are crowds of people who do not like to be approached at night. Nevertheless, as far as Ferdinando could make out, the man was wrapped in a cloak like the one that was worn by the man in the chapel. But this idea presenting itself to the young count's mind acted only as a spur the more to make him push the affair to its conclusion that very night. For several days he had been making little concessions to himself, which he now thought much too prudent ; and he made up his mind to settle the matter at once and recoil at nothing.

At the château he found neither file nor pincers, but he did find a crowbar, which would serve him equally well to break down the second door instead

of opening it. At the point at which he had now arrived, it did not matter to him how the door was made to yield, provided it yielded. Armed with this new implement, and renewing the candle in his lantern, he returned to the chapel, approached the altar, raised the step, took up the peg, shook it—but uselessly, the key was gone! No doubt the man in the cloak had returned during his absence, and was now in the cavern.

This time, as I have said, Ferdinando was firmly decided to recoil at nothing. He rose, pale but calm; examined the priming of his pistols, made sure that his sword came freely from its scabbard, and walked to the wall to listen for any noise. As he did so, the door opened and he found himself face to face with the man in the cloak.

Both, by instinct, made a step backward, and lighted each other mutually by the lanterns they held in their hands. The man in the cloak then perceived that the person with whom he had to do was almost a boy, and a disdainful smile came upon his lips. Ferdinando saw that smile, understood its meaning, and resolved to prove to the intruder that he was mistaken, and that he himself was indeed a man to be reckoned with.

Then followed a moment's silence, during which they both drew their swords, for the unknown man wore a sword, though he had no pistols.

“Who are you?” asked the count imperiously, being the first to break silence. “And what are you doing at this hour in this chapel?”

“What are you doing here yourself, my little

gentleman?" sneered the stranger; "and who are you, if you please, to speak to me in that tone?"

"I am Don Ferdinando, son of the Marchese di San Floridio, and this chapel belongs to my family."

"Don Ferdinando, son of the Marchese di San Floridio!" repeated the stranger in tones of astonishment. "And why are you here at this hour?"

"You forget it is for me to question you. Why are *you* here?"

"That, my young gentleman," said the stranger, coming out of the corridor, locking the door and taking out the key, "is a secret which, with your permission, I shall keep to myself, for it concerns only me."

"All that passes here on my estate concerns me," replied Ferdinando. "Your secret, or your life!"

So saying, he touched the point of his sword to the breast of the stranger, who seeing its glitter, put it hastily aside with his own.

"Ho! ho!" cried the young count, for rapid as the action had been, he recognized by the unusual way the parry had been made that his adversary was perfectly ignorant of the noble art of fencing. "You are not a gentleman, my good friend, for you do not know how to handle a sword; you are simply a clown, and that's another thing. Your secret, or I'll have you hanged!"

The man in the cloak gave vent to a roar of anger; nevertheless, after making a step in advance as if to fling himself upon the young count, he stopped and restrained the impulse.

"No," he said, with some coolness. "No! I have

a mind to spare you on account of the name you bear; but it can't be done if you insist on knowing the purpose for which I come here. Retire instantly, forget that you have seen me, cease your visits to this chapel, swear upon that altar that no one shall ever know you met me here. The Floridios, I know, are men of honour; you will keep your oath. On those conditions I will let you live."

It was now Ferdinando's turn to roar.

"Miserable wretch!" he cried, "you threaten when you ought to tremble! you question when you ought to answer! Who are you? what are you doing here? where does that door lead? Answer, or you are dead!"

And the count touched his sword for the second time to the other man's breast.

This time the latter did not merely parry, he returned a thrust, flinging away his lantern to hide himself as much as possible from the thrusts of his adversary; but Ferdinando, extending his left arm, lighted him clearly with his lantern, and a terrible struggle ensued between strength on one side and skill on the other. In face of danger Ferdinando had recovered all his courage; for several seconds he contented himself by parrying with as much skill as coolness the inexperienced thrusts of his enemy; then, attacking in his turn with his trained superiority he forced the man backward till he brought him to a stand against a column, where seeing the impossibility of further struggle, he thrust his sword with such violence into the man's breast that it not only went through his body, but blunted itself against the

column on the other side. Instantly he made one step in retreat, withdrawing his sword and putting himself on guard.

A moment of dead silence followed, during which the count, turning the light of his lantern full on the unknown man, saw him put his left hand to his breast, while his right, which no longer had strength to hold the sword, dropped slowly, letting fall the weapon ; then the wounded man sank slowly to his knees saying as he did so :

“I am dead !”

“If you are wounded as badly as you say,” returned Ferdinando, not moving from his position for fear of being surprised, “I think you would do well to think of your soul, which does not seem to me in a state of grace. I advise you, if you have a secret to reveal, to lose no time. If it is a secret which I may hear, tell it to me ; if it can be revealed to no one but a priest, say so, and I will fetch one.”

“Yes,” said the dying man, “I have a secret, and a secret which concerns you, if you really are, as you say, the son of the Marchese di San Floridio.”

“I told you, and I repeat it, I am Don Ferdinando, Count of San Floridio, sole heir of my family.”

“Go to the altar and swear it on the crucifix.”

The count rebelled at the thought that a clown should refuse to believe his word, but reflecting that he owed some indulgence to a man about to die by his act he went to the altar, mounted the steps, and made the required oath.

“That is well,” said the wounded man, “now come nearer and take this key.”

The young man eagerly advanced and held out his hand, into which the dying man placed a key. The count felt at its touch that it was not the key of the secret door.

“What key is this?” he asked.

“You must go to Carlentini,” said the man, evading an answer to the question; “there you must ask for the house of Gaetano Cantarello; you must enter that house alone—alone, do you hear me? In the bedroom, at the foot of the bed you will find a tile marked with a cross; beneath that tile is a coffer in which are sixty thousand ducats; you will take them: they are yours.”

“What is all this tale?” asked the count. “I don’t know you; I don’t wish to inherit money from you.”

“Those sixty thousand ducats belong to you. They were stolen from your uncle, the Marchese di San Floridio of Messina, by me, Gaetano Cantarello, his servant. It is not an inheritance; it is a restitution.”

“Inheritance or restitution, I don’t care which,” cried the count. “I am not searching for sixty thousand ducats; that is not the secret I wish to know. Here,” he added flinging the key to Cantarello, “take back the key of your house, and give me in exchange the key of this door;” and he pointed to the wall.

“Come and take it,” said Cantarello in a dying voice, “I have no strength to give it to you; here, here in this pocket.”

Ferdinando advanced without distrust and leaned over the dying man. But the latter seized him

suddenly with his left hand and with the desperate strength of dying power, while with the right he grasped his sword and struck the young man a blow which luckily deflected, causing only a comparatively slight wound.

“Ah! miserable traitor!” cried the count, snatching a pistol from his belt and discharging it point-blank at Cantarello. “Die as a dog and a reprobate if you will not repent as a Christian and a man.”

Cantarello fell over, — this time quite dead.

Ferdinando stooped over him, his second pistol in hand for fear of surprise; then, very certain there was nothing to fear, he searched the body carefully; but nowhere, in no pocket, could he find the key of the secret door. Doubtless, in the struggle Cantarello had flung it behind him, hoping in that way to prevent his adversary from obtaining it.

Then the count picked up his lantern which he had let fall, and began to search for the key leading to the secret which continued to escape him in so singular a manner. At the end of a few minutes, weakened by loss of blood from his wound, he felt his head humming as if all the bells of the chapel were ringing at once; the pillars that supported the roof seemed to detach themselves from the floor and walk round him; he fancied the walls were closing in and would smother him like those of a tomb. With a mighty effort he sprang towards the door of the chapel to breathe the open air; but before he had made ten steps in that direction his weakness overcame him and he fell unconscious.

When Don Ferdinando came to himself he was

lying in a bedroom of the château Belvedere, his mother weeping beside him, the marquis walking with great strides up and down the room, and the doctor preparing to bleed him for the fifth time. Peppino the gardener, through whom the young count had made such frequent inquiries about the man in the cloak, had felt anxious at seeing his master go out so late ; he had followed him at a distance ; hearing the pistol-shot he entered the chapel and found Ferdinando unconscious and Cantarello dead.

The young count's first words were a question as to whether the key had been found. The marquis and his wife exchanged anxious looks.

"Do not be uneasy," said the doctor ; "after so serious a wound, there is nothing surprising in a little delirium."

"I am perfectly calm, and I know very well what I am saying," declared Ferdinando. "I ask if the key of the secret door has been found, — a little key, made like the key of a piano."

"Oh ! my poor child !" cried the marchesa, clasping her hands and raising her eyes to heaven.

"Tranquillize yourself, madam," said the doctor, "it is only a passing delirium ; after this fifth bleeding —"

"Go to the devil, you and your bleeding, doctor !" cried the patient. "You have drawn more blood out of me with your miserable lancet than Cantarello with his sword."

"Oh ! he is mad ! he is mad !" sobbed his mother.

"Well, in any case, my dear father," said Ferdi-

nando, "my madness will serve your interests, for I have recovered for you sixty thousand ducats which you thought you had lost, but which are now at Calentini, at the foot of Cantarello's bed, under a tile marked by a cross; you can send and get them and see if I am mad. Let me alone, doctor; what I want is a good roast chicken and a bottle of Bordeaux wine, and none of your curséd bleedings."

It was now the doctor who raised his eyes to heaven.

"My child, my dear child!" cried the marchesa; "do you wish to make me die of grief?"

"Is another bleeding absolutely indispensable?" asked his father.

"Absolutely," replied the doctor.

"Well, then, we must call in four of the servants and have him held by main force on the bed while you operate."

"Good God!" cried the count, "there's no need of all that. Is it going to give you a vast deal of pleasure, my dear mother, to see me bled?"

"Yes, because they say it will do you good."

"Here, doctor, here's my arm; but it is to be the last time, you know."

"Yes, the last time," said the doctor, "provided it relieves the head and causes the delirium to disappear."

The doctor performed his operation, but as the count was already horribly weakened he could not support this fresh loss of blood and he fainted again; fortunately this return of unconsciousness lasted only a few moments.

While they were bleeding him against his will

Ferdinando made certain reflections ; he saw that if he talked any more about the key of the piano, the buried money, and the secret door, they would think him still delirious, and bleed and re-bleed him till all his natural strength was gone. Consequently, he resolved to say nothing more of those matters, but to keep himself to himself and accomplish entirely alone an enterprise he had begun alone. So the young count came out of his second unconsciousness with the meekest disposition in the world ; he kissed his mother, saluted his father respectfully, and held out his hand to the doctor, saying that he felt it was to his great art he owed his life. At these words the doctor declared the delirium had entirely disappeared, and answered for his patient's recovery.

Ferdinando then risked asking for a few details as to what had happened. He learned that the gardener had followed him, and hearing a pistol-shot had entered the church and found him lying ten paces distant from a dead man, in a condition not far removed from that of the corpse. These questions on his part naturally led to others on the part of his father and mother. But Ferdinando simply answered that having entered the church out of curiosity because in passing he fancied he heard a noise there, he had been attacked by a tall man whom he believed he had killed. He added that he was very desirous to thank the gardener for his zeal, and he requested that Peppino should be brought to see him. They promised that if on the morrow he should continue to get better his request would be granted.

That very evening, as the marquis and his wife, profiting by a doze of their patient, had gone to supper, Ferdinando, waking up, heard the voice of Peppino at his door, asking about the condition of his young master. Instantly Ferdinando called out to the servants to let him in. The footman on service hesitated, but Ferdinando reiterated the order in so imperative a tone that on the count's promise that he would keep him only a few moments the man admitted him.

"Peppino," said Ferdinando as soon as the door was closed, "you are a brave fellow, and I regret now I did not put more confidence in you. You can earn a hundred *onces* if you choose to obey me, and obey only me."

"Speak, my young lord," replied Peppino.

"What have they done with the man I killed?"

"Taken him to the village church, where his body was shown in order to get it recognized."

"Has it been recognized?"

"Yes."

"For whom?"

"The man with the cloak who went to the Rizzos'."

"But his name?"

"Not known."

"Good. They searched him?"

"Yes, but they found nothing on him but money, flint, tinder, and a match. All those articles are on view at the judge's house."

"Among them was there a key?"

"I think not."

"Go to the judge's house; examine those articles

minutely, and if there is a key come back and tell me what shape it is. If there is no key, go to the chapel and hunt all round the column near which the body lay ; you will find two keys."

"Two?"

"Yes ; one, a good deal like the key of this secretary ; the other, small and round, like the key of a piano — here ! like that one over there. Do you understand?"

"Perfectly."

"Whether you find one, or whether you find two, you are to bring whatever you find back to me — but only to me, mind you."

"To no one but you, that's agreed."

"Come to-morrow, Peppino."

"To-morrow, Excellency."

"By the bye ! come when my father and mother are at breakfast, so that we can talk at our ease."

"Good ; I'll watch the time."

"The hundred *onces* will be ready for you."

"They will be very welcome, your Excellency, seeing that I am going to marry that daughter of Rizzo, — a fine slip of a girl."

"Hush ! here's my mother coming back. Go through that closet, and down by the little staircase, so that she may not see you."

Peppino obeyed. When the marchesa entered she found her son alone and perfectly himself.

The next day at the hour agreed upon, Peppino returned. He had executed his commission with admirable intelligence. Among the articles at the judge's house was an ordinary key like that of a

secretary. Having made sure of this fact, Peppino went to the chapel and made such a thorough search that on the opposite side of the altar he had found the second key, made like that of a piano. No doubt Cantarello had flung it as far away from him as he could. The young count seized it eagerly ; he saw it was the very same that he had found under the first step of the altar, the one which opened the door of the corridor. He hid it under the pillow of his bed. Then, turning to Peppino, he said :

“Listen. I don’t know when I shall be able to get up ; but, at all hazards, have ready in your own house for the moment when I shall want them, two torches, pincers, a file, and a crowbar, and try not to be out of your own house at night for the next fifteen days.”

Peppino promised the count to have ready the articles required, and went away.

Left alone, Ferdinando wanted to see how much strength he had, and he tried to rise. But scarcely did he get into a sitting posture before he felt everything twirling about him. His wound was not serious, but the doctor’s bleedings had so weakened him that, seeing he was likely to faint again, he lay down as fast as possible, fully understanding that before he attempted any further action he must wait till his strength came back.

So he remained all that day and all the morrow very quiet, showing no signs of delirium beyond demanding from time to time chicken and Bordeaux wine. But, as will readily be believed, the doctor considered those demands exorbitant and even crazy ;

he said they denoted the remains of fever which must be combated ; so he ordered herb broth to be severely continued, and talked of a sixth bleeding if these symptoms of disordered appetite, which indicated weakness of the patient's stomach, were not subdued. Ferdinando took the hint, and seeing that he was absolutely at the doctor's mercy, he resigned himself to the herb broth.

At the end of another ten days, being really well and allowed to move about the house, he sent for Peppino, and as soon as he was alone with him asked for news of what had happened during his confinement. Nothing had happened ; all was in precisely the same state. The name of the dead man, who had now been buried, was still unknown ; no one had entered the chapel, but peasants passing the place at night said they heard groans and the sound of chains being rattled underground, — proof positive that the deceased had died in his sins, and that his soul had come back to ask the prayers of him who had so violently and unexpectedly driven it from his body.

All this only made Ferdinando the more determined to carry out his original intentions, and he resolved to attempt the enterprise at once. Consequently, he told the tale to Peppino, ordered him to keep it secret, and to be ready with torches, crowbar, pincers, and file at the little park gate leading from the château to the chapel on the night but one following. Peppino promised all that his young master wished.

Everything went on as planned : Ferdinando, no longer nursed and watched, left the château soon

after midnight, met Peppino at the little gate, and together they entered the chapel.

The impression on Don Ferdinando was deep when he found himself again at the spot where he had gone through such violent emotions and run so terrible a danger ; but none the less did he advance with a firm step towards the secret door, noting on his way the stains of Cantarello's dried blood which still reddened the pavement about the column at the foot of which he had fallen. Ferdinando turned aside with an involuntary shudder, made a circuit, looking askance and in silence at the traces Death had left in passing ; then he went straight to the secret door which he opened without difficulty. Once in the corridor the two young men lighted each a torch and continued their way, went down the staircase and found the second door. In an instant they had broken it in ; but as it opened so noxious an exhalation issued through it that both were obliged to step back several paces in order to breathe at all. Don Ferdinando then ordered the gardener to go back and set the first door open, so that the outer air could enter these subterranean vaults. Peppino went back, fixed the door open, and returned. Ferdinando, impatient, had already continued his way, and Peppino saw the light of his torch shining brilliantly in the distance. Suddenly the gardener heard a cry and rushed towards his master. Ferdinando was leaning against a third door, which he had just opened ; so horrible a spectacle had met his eyes that he could not repress the cry at which Peppino hastened to him.

This third door opened into a low vaulted cellar in which were three dead bodies: that of a man fastened to the wall by a chain that went round his waist; that of a woman lying on a mattress; that of a child fifteen or eighteen months old lying on its mother. Suddenly the young men quivered; they thought they heard a moan. The man and woman were really dead, but the child still breathed; its mouth was glued to a vein in the arm of its mother, and it seemed to owe its prolonged existence to the blood it had sucked. Nevertheless, the babe's weakness was so great that it was evident if prompt care were not given to it, nothing could save it; the woman appeared to be dead for some hours, the man for two or three days.

Don Ferdinando's decision was rapid and such as the gravity of the case demanded: he ordered Peppino to take the child; then, convincing himself that no other creature dead or living was in the vault, except the man and woman (who were unknown to both the young men), he closed the door, left the cave hastily, closed the secret exit, and followed by Peppino made his way to the village of Belvedere. As they went along Peppino gathered an orange, and squeezed a little of the juice on the lips of the child, which opened its eyes, but shut them instantly, laying its hands upon them and moaning as if the light had painfully dazzled them. But as, at the same time, the child opened its gasping mouth, Peppino renewed his experiment, and the child, though still keeping its eyes closed, seemed to revive a very little.

Don Ferdinando went straight to the judge, told him word for word what had happened, showed him the child in proof of what he said, and summoned him to go with him to the vault to draw up the *procès-verbal* and identify the dead. Then, accompanied by the judge, he went to the doctor's house, left the baby in charge of the doctor's wife, and all four went to the chapel. Everything there was in the same state as when Ferdinando and Peppino left it. The *procès-verbal* began.

The body chained to the wall was that of a man some thirty-five or thirty-six years of age, who seemed to have struggled fearfully to break his chain; his twisted arms were stretched towards his wife's mouth, and covered with wounds made by his own teeth, seemingly those of despair more than of hunger. The doctor declared that he must have been dead about two days. The man was totally unknown both to him and to the judge, and to the young count.

The woman may have been twenty-six or twenty-eight years old. Her death seemed to have been rather quiet. She had opened a vein with a knitting-needle, no doubt to prolong the life of her child, and had died of weakness, as already said. The doctor judged she had been dead but a few hours. She seemed, like the man, a total stranger to the village, neither the doctor nor the judge nor the count could recall having ever seen her.

Near the head of the women and against the wall was a broken chair covered with a petticoat. The judge moved the chair and it was then seen that it had been placed there to hide a hole made at the

base of the wall. This hole was large enough for a person to pass through it, but it stopped at a depth of four feet. Examination being made of this hole, it proved to have been hollowed by the use of a wooden instrument that the Sicilian women call a *mazzarello*; it is the same that our women slip through their belts to hold their knitting-needles. They also found beneath the mattress — such is the power of the will, the strength of despair — several large stones from the foundation of the wall, which must have been wrenched by this woman with no assistance other than her hands and that frail tool. The earth, as well as the stones, had been covered by the mattress, no doubt to conceal them from whoever watched these prisoners.

The examination went on. In a depression of the wall a bottle was found in which there had been oil; a jug in which there had been water, an extinguished lamp, and a tin cup. Another depression in the wall was blackened and calcined, showing that fire must have been lighted several times, although there was no vent at all by which the smoke could escape.

A table stood in the middle of this cellar. The judge, as he placed himself at it to write, noticed a second tin cup, in which was a black liquid; near this cup was a pen, and on the ground three or four sheets of paper. It was then seen that these sheets were covered with very small, fine writing, ill-spelt, but legible. Search was instantly made for other pieces of paper, and two were found in the straw that lay beneath the body of the man. These sheets of paper did not seem to have been hidden intention-

ally, but rather to have fallen accidentally from the table and been scattered by the feet. As the pages were numbered they could be put together and read consecutively. The judge read them aloud, and here is what he read:

“In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, so be it:

I write these lines in the hope that they may fall into the hands of some charitable person. Whoever that person may be, we implore him in the name of all that he holds most dear in this world and the next, to take us out of the tomb in which we have been shut up, my husband, my child, and myself, for several years, without having deserved in any way this awful punishment.

My name is Teresa Lentini. I was born at Taormina; I must now be twenty-eight or twenty-nine years old. Since the moment when we were shut up in this cellar where I now write, I have been unable to count hours or separate day from night; I have had no measure for time. We have been here a very long time; that is all I know.

I was at Catania, in the household of the Marchese di San Floridio, where I was foster-sister to the young Contessa Lucia. The young countess died in, I think, 1798; but the marchesa, whom I reminded of her dearly beloved daughter, wished to keep me near her. She died too, that good and worthy marchesa; God keep her soul; she was beloved by every one.

I then wished to go back to my mother, but the

Marchese di San Floridio would not permit it. He had with him, as steward, a man whose ancestors had been in the service of his own ancestors during five or six generations; this man knew all about his property and all his secrets, — a man, in short, in whom he had the greatest confidence. His name was Gaetano Cantarello. The marquis was resolved to marry me to this man, that we might both, he said, remain with him until his death.

Cantarello was a man about twenty-eight to thirty years of age; handsome, but with rather a hard face. There was nothing to say against him; he seemed an honest man; he was neither a gambler nor dissolute. He had inherited from his father and received from the kindness of the marquis a considerable sum for a man in his position; it was therefore a good match for me, considering my poverty. But when the marquis spoke to me of this project I trembled, in spite of myself, and wept. There was something in the frowning eyebrows of that man, in the savage expression of his eyes, in the harsh tones of his voice, that frightened me instinctively. It is true, I heard all my companions say how lucky I was to be loved by Cantarello, and that Cantarello was the handsomest man in Messina. I asked myself within me whether or not I was crazy to judge my betrothed in this way. I blamed myself for being unjust to that poor Cantarello, but all the same, I not only had an instinctive repulsion for him, but I did not conceal from myself that I had just the opposite sentiment for a young vine-dresser in the neighbourhood of Paterno, named Luigi Pol-

lino, who was my cousin. We had loved each other as friends from childhood and we could not have told, ourselves, at what time friendship had changed to love.

Our despair, his and mine, was great when the marquis made known his projects about Cantarello and me, — all the greater because my mother, who saw in this marriage a rise I could never have hoped to make, abandoned entirely the interests of poor Luigi to take up those of the rich steward, and ordered me to renounce my cousin and think of no one in future but his rival.

This happened at the beginning of the year 1783; the marriage day was fixed for March 15th, when the 5th of February, that day of terrible memories, arrived. All the preceding day, the 4th, the sirocco had blown, so that every one was stupid with the torpor which that wind brings with it. The Marchese di San Floridio was held fast by the gout in his apartment, where he was lying on a *chaise longue*. I was sitting in the next room so as to run to him at his first call if by chance he needed anything, when suddenly a strange sound hurtled through the air, and the palace began to rock like a vessel at sea. Presently the wall between my room and that of the marquis was split apart wide enough to pass a hand through it, while the parallel wall crumbled down and the ceiling, being without support on that side, came down to the floor. I threw myself to the opposite side to avoid the crush, and I was thus caught as it were under a roof. At the same moment I heard a loud cry from the marquis's bed-chamber.

I was close to the fissure made in the wall ; I applied my eye to it. A falling beam had struck the marquis on the head and he had rolled from his chair to the floor quite bewildered. I was about to run to his assistance when I saw Cantarello enter the chamber through the door that was opposite to me.

At the sight of his unconscious master, Cantarello's face assumed such a strange expression that I shuddered with terror. He looked all about him to see if he was alone ; then, certain that no one was there he sprang upon his master ; I thought at first he meant to succour him, but I was soon undeceived. He detached the rope-belt that fastened the marquis's dressing-gown and wound it round his neck ; then pressing his knee against his master's chest he strangled him. In his death-throes the marquis opened his eyes, and no doubt recognized his murderer, for he held out to him his clasped hands. I gave an involuntary cry. Cantarello raised his head. "Is any one there?" he asked in a terrible voice. It was then that I saw in their full expression of ferocity those frowning eyebrows, that look which had always, even when his face was calm, so terrified me. Trembling and nearly dead with fear, I kept silence and sank down upon the floor. Presently, as no one came, I rose, and applied my eyes once more to the crack ; for I forgot the danger I ran in remaining in a palace that might crumble to pieces at any moment, so grasped and fascinated was I by the dreadful scene that was passing before my eyes. The marquis lay upon the floor without movement and evidently dead. Cantarello was standing

before a secretary, which all of us knew to be full of gold and bank-notes, for never was the key left in it, and we knew that the marquis carried that key upon his person. Cantarello took gold and bank-notes by the handfuls and thrust them into the pockets of his clothing; then, when he had taken all, he pulled from the marquis's bed the corn-stalk mattress, tipped the secretary over upon the mattress, heaped the chairs on the secretary, and putting a brand from the stove to the pile, he set fire to it. Then, as soon as he saw flames beginning to rise, he rushed through the door by which he had entered.

As this is a deadly accusation, which I bring against a human being, I swear before God and before men that my tale is true; and that I neither add to nor withhold any of the facts that passed before my sight.

The marquis was dead; the flames were making frightful progress; shocks still shook the palace so that it seemed at every instant as if it must come down. The instinct of self-preservation then awoke in me; I dragged myself out of the wreck and rubbish that surrounded me on all sides; I reached a staircase and went down it like one in a dream, not treading on the steps. Behind me the stairs were engulfed. In the vestibule I suddenly came face to face with Cantarello. I uttered a cry, he tried to take me under the arm and lead me away, but I sprang into the street crying for help. The streets were full of flying persons; I mingled with the crowd; I was lost in its flood, which pushed me

before it and with it to the great square. I had lost Cantarello from sight, and that was all I cared for at the moment. The day went by in dreadful fears, then night came. Most of the houses in Messina were in flames; the conflagration lighted the streets and squares like a lurid and terrifying day. Still, a little tranquillity seemed to come with the night; the dead were reckoned by their absence; the living were searched for; whoever had father, mother, brother, or friend, called them by name. I had no one; my mother lived at Taormina. I was sitting in silence, my head on my knees, and seeing over and over again ceaselessly the horrible deed I had witnessed the day before, when all of a sudden I heard my name called in tones of unspeakable dread. I raised my head; I saw a man running from group to group like a madman. It was Luigi. I rose, and pronounced his name; he saw me, gave a cry of joy, bounded towards me, took me in his arms, and bore me away like an infant. I let him do it; I flung my arms about his neck and closed my eyes. All around us I heard cries of terror; through my eyelids I saw red gleams; at times I felt the heat of flames. At last, after perhaps half an hour, the pace at which we were going slackened, then it stopped. I opened my eyes; we were out of the town; Luigi, worn out with fatigue, had dropped on one knee and was supporting me against the other. On the horizon, Messina was burning and crumbling down with mighty moans. I was saved, I was in my Luigi's arms, I was out of the power of that infamous Cantarello, — I thought so at least.

I rose eagerly. "I can walk," I said to Luigi. "Let us flee, let us flee!"

Luigi had recovered breath; he was as ardent to carry me off as I to go; he passed his arm around my body, and we resumed our course. On reaching Contessi, we saw a man who was driving from the half-destroyed village five or six mules. Luigi went to him and proposed to buy one of them which was all saddled; the price was settled in an instant. The mule paid for, Luigi mounted it and I sprang up behind him. By daylight we reached Taormina. I ran to my mother's house; she had thought me dead, poor woman! I told her that the marquis was dead, the palace burned; I told her, too, that I should have died twenty times over but for Luigi; I threw myself at her feet, and swore that I would rather die than belong to Cantarello.

She loved me; she yielded. Luigi entered; she called him her son, and it was agreed that on the morrow I should become his wife. That which made her the more willing was that I had lost everything by the death of the marquis. The position I occupied in his household was above that of ordinary servants; therefore I had no fixed salary. From time to time the marquis made me gifts of money, which I sent at once to my mother. Besides this, as I have said, he promised to give me a dowry. This dowry, I knew, was to be 10,000 ducats, but no writing secured it and the marquis had made no will; the money, though pledged, was not a debt. The family were ignorant of the promise, and not for the world would I have tried to claim it as a

right. I had, therefore, really lost all by the death of the marquis, and my mother, who had so obstinately refused to marry me to Luigi was now, I think, glad at the bottom of her soul that his feelings for me had not changed, as might well have been the case with Cantarello. Besides, she really loved me ; she had seen my distaste for the latter change into insurmountable aversion, and now heard me swear in tones of truth that I would die sooner than belong to that man. Had Cantarello been there to claim me, she would, I think, have left me free to choose between him and his rival.

The day went by in attending on both sides to the duties of religion. The priest was asked to be ready the next morning at ten o'clock ; our relations and friends were notified that we should receive the nuptial benediction at that hour. As for Luigi, he had long had neither father nor mother, and no relations near enough to make it a duty to notify them.

These were sad auspices for a marriage. Though the earthquake was less felt at Taormina, built as it is upon a rock, than at Messina and Catania, the town had not been exempt from shocks, which might at any moment become violent. But God kept us safe for this time, and daylight dawned without serious accident. Ten o'clock struck, and we went to the church accompanied by nearly the whole village. On entering, I fancied I saw a man hiding behind a pillar in the darkest corner of the church. Simple and natural as the presence of inquisitive persons was, my eyes, whether from instinct or pre-

sentiment could not detach themselves from that figure.

The mass began ; but just as we knelt before the altar the man came out from behind the column, advanced towards us, and placing himself between the priest and me, said :

“This marriage cannot go on.”

“Cantarello !” cried Luigi, putting his hand in his pocket to get out his knife. I seized his arm forcibly, though I felt that I turned pale myself.

“Do not disturb a divine ceremony,” said the priest.

“This marriage cannot go on,” repeated Cantarello, in a louder and more imperious voice than before.

“Why not ?” asked the priest.

“Because this woman is my wife,” replied Cantarello, pointing his finger at me.

“I ! the wife of that man !” I exclaimed ; “he is mad.”

“It is you, Teresa, who are mad,” he said, coldly ; “or rather who have lost your memory. Do you not remember that the Marchese di San Floridio had long betrothed us to each other, and that on the very evening before the earthquake — I mean on the 4th at midnight — we were married in his chapel with himself as witness, married by his own chaplain ?”

I gave a cry of terror, for the marquis and the chaplain were both dead, and neither could bear testimony on my behalf.

“Have you committed this sacrilege, my daughter ?” asked the priest, coming towards me with an air of doubt.

“Father!” I cried, “by all that is most sacred in the world I affirm —”

“And I,” said Cantarello, stretching his hand towards the altar, “I swear —”

“No perjury!” I cried, “no perjury! Have you not crimes enough already for which you must render an account to God?”

Cantarello quivered and looked at me fixedly as if he wished to read to the bottom of my soul; but this time, instead of terrifying me, his glance gave me fresh strength, for in it I saw an appearance of terror. I profited by that moment of fear.

“Father,” I said to the priest, “this man is a poor mad creature who has loved me; I can attribute the crime he has attempted here to-day only to the excess of his love. Let me speak to him, I beg of you, in a low voice, near the altar, but in presence of you all; and I hope to make him repent and own the truth.”

Cantarello burst out laughing.

“The truth!” he cried, “I have told it; there is no power on earth that can make me say otherwise.”

“Silence!” I answered, “and follow me.”

God gave me a mysterious, unheard-of strength, of which I should never have supposed myself capable. The priest came down from the altar. I signed to Cantarello to follow me; he did so. All present formed a wide semicircle around us; Luigi alone stood forward, his hand on his knife and never taking his eyes from us.

“Teresa,” said Cantarello, in a low voice and speaking first, as if he feared what I might say,

“why have you broken the promise you gave to the Marchese di San Floridio? Why do you force me to have recourse to these means?”

“Because,” I answered, looking fixedly at him, “I do not choose to be the wife of a thief and a murderer.”

Cantarello turned pale as death; but with that exception nothing showed that the blow I had given him struck home.

“Thief and murderer!” he repeated laughing; “you will explain to me those words, I hope.”

“I have but one explanation to give you: I was in the next room and I saw all through a crack in the wall.”

“What did you see?” asked Cantarello.

“I saw you enter the chamber of the marquis at the moment when he was struck by the beam; I saw you rush upon him; I saw you strangle him with the rope of his dressing-gown; I saw you force open the secretary, and take everything—gold and bank-notes; then I saw you pull the straw mattress from the bed, overturn the secretary, chairs, and sofa upon it, and set fire to the pile with a brand from the stove. It was I who uttered the cry that made you raise your head; and when you met me below in the vestibule and I fled you, you thought I was pale with terror, did you not? No, it was horror.”

“Your story is not ill-imagined,” said Cantarello.

“No doubt you hope it will be believed.”

“Yes; for it is not a tale, but a terrible reality.”

“What proof have you?”

“Proof?”

“Yes; you must give proofs. The palace is burned, the body is consumed, the secretary that contained this imaginary gold and bank-notes is in ashes. Yes the proof! what proof have you?”

Doubtless God inspired me.

“Then you do not know what happened?”

“What happened?”

“After your departure, after you had quitted the town to hide your stolen money in some secure retreat, the servants of the marquis assembled and in a tranquil moment they went up to his room. The body was found intact, brought down to the chapel, and the marks of strangulation were plainly seen around the neck. The secretary is in ashes, yes; the bank-notes are burned, yes; but gold neither melts nor burns. The servants know that that secretary was full of gold; they will search for the rolls of it; they will not find them; then I shall tell them where they can be found, and when the cellars and gardens of your house in Catania are thoroughly searched they will be found.”

Cantarello uttered a sort of low growl that I alone could hear; I saw that he hesitated whether to stab me on the spot or not, at the risk of what might result.

“If you make a movement,” I said, recoiling a step, “I will call for help, and you are lost. See.”

It was as I said; Luigi and three young men, our relations, stood ready to rush upon Cantarello at the first sign I made them. Cantarello gave a side glance at them, saw their hostile intentions, and seemed to reflect a moment.

"And if I withdraw, if I quit Sicily, if I leave you to be happy with your Luigi, — what then?"

"Then I will hold my tongue."

"What assures me of that?"

"My oath."

"And your husband, will he know what happened?"

"Not so long as you leave us in peace, and do nothing to trouble us."

"Then swear."

I extended my hand to the altar.

"O my God!" I said in a low voice, "receive the oath that I make to never tell to living soul what I saw at the palazzo San Floridio during the day of the 5th. Hear the oath that I make to the murderer and thief to conceal his crime from all the world as though I were his accomplice, and never, directly or indirectly, reveal it to any one."

"Even in confession?"

"Not even in confession; unless," I added, "he himself releases me from this oath by attempting some further persecution."

"Swear by the blood of Christ."

"By the blood of Christ, I swear it."

"Father," said Cantarello, going down the steps of the altar and addressing the priest, "I am a poor sinner; forgive me and pray for me. I lied; this woman is free."

Then, having said these words in a tone that seemed as if repentance alone had brought them from his lips, Cantarello passed the group of young men, Luigi and he exchanging looks, the one of

disdain, the other of menace, and with firm step, wrapping himself in his cloak, he reached the door of the church and disappeared.

The marriage ceremony, so strangely and unexpectedly interrupted, was completed without further incident. On our return to the house Luigi asked me what had passed between Cantarello and myself; and what power I had over him to make him obey me as he did. I answered that, as he must have seen, I had made an oath, and that oath was to keep total silence. Luigi did not insist; he knew that no entreaties could make me break a promise thus solemnly made, and I never perceived that he had any unpleasant recollection of my refusal.

We went to live in Luigi's house. It was a pretty little house, standing alone in a vineyard a couple of miles from Paterno, on the other side of the Gravitta, on the road to Centorbi. As for Cantarello, he had left Sicily, so they said, and no one had seen him since the moment when he quitted the church at Taormina. Nothing had transpired in regard to the murder or the theft, and no suspicion existed that the Marchese di San Floridio was not killed accidentally. For three years Luigi and I were the happiest creatures upon earth: our only grief was the loss of our first child. But God soon after sent us a second, full of vigour and health, and we began to forget our first loss however sorrowful it was. Our child was put out to nurse at Feminamorta, a little village about six miles from our house, and every Sunday we went to see it, or else its nurse brought it to see us.

One night — it was the night of December 2d and 3d, 1787 — some one rapped violently on our door. Luigi rose to ask who it was. “Open,” said a voice, “I come from Feminamorta; sent by the nurse of your child.”

I gave a cry of terror, for a messenger sent at that hour boded no good. Luigi opened the door. A man in peasant’s dress stood by it.

“What is it?” asked Luigi; “is our child ill?”

“It was taken with convulsions at five o’clock,” said the peasant, “and the nurse sends you word that if you do not make haste and come she is afraid the poor innocent will die before you can have the comfort of kissing it.”

“A doctor!” I cried, “a doctor! can we not fetch one from Paterno?”

“Useless,” replied the peasant, “it would only delay you, and the village doctor is with the child.”

Then, as if hurried himself, he started back along the road to Feminamorta at a run.

“If you get there before us,” Luigi called after him, “say that we are following you.”

“Yes,” replied the peasant from a distance.

We dressed in haste, weeping; then, locking the door behind us, we started for Feminamorta; but, half-way there, as we were passing a spot narrowed by rocks on both sides, four masked men sprang upon us, knocked us down, bound our hands and legs, and put a gag in our mouths and a bandage on our eyes. Then, calling up a litter borne on the backs of mules, they made us get into it, Luigi and me, locked

the door with a key, and started off along the highway, the mules going at a fast trot. We went on thus for four or five hours; then we stopped; an instant later the door of the litter opened and we felt, from the cold dampness about us, that we must be in some sort of grotto; then they removed our gags.

"Where are we? and where are you taking us?" I asked at once, and so did Luigi.

"Eat and drink," said a voice that was wholly unknown to us, while some one loosed our hands, leaving our legs bound; "eat and drink, and concern yourselves about nothing else."

I tore the bandage from my eyes. As I had supposed, we were in a cavern; two masked men were guarding the entrance, pistol in hand, while the two others handed us wine and bread.

Luigi pushed away the wine and bread when offered to him and made an attempt to undo the rope that bound his legs. One of the men pointed a pistol at his breast.

"Another movement, and you are a dead man," he said.

I entreated Luigi to make no resistance. They offered us the bread and wine again.

"I am not hungry or thirsty," said Luigi.

"Nor I, either," I added.

"As you please," said the man who had already spoken, "but you will please allow us to bind your hands, gag you, and blindfold you, as before."

"Do what you like," I said; "we are in your power."

"Infamous wretches!" muttered Luigi.

"In Heaven's name," I said to him, "make no resistance, Luigi; don't you see that these men are not wishing to kill us. Have patience, and they may have pity upon us."

To this hope, which I uttered in tones of distress, a man's laugh replied; but that laugh made me shudder to the depths of my soul. I recognized it. I had already heard it in the church of Taormina. Beyond a doubt we were in the power of Cantarello, and he was one of the four masked men who escorted us. I held out my hands and let them gag me submissively. Not so Luigi; a struggle took place between him and the man who tried to gag him; but the three others came to the assistance of their companion, and Luigi was bound and gagged by force; then they blindfolded him and closed the doors and curtains of the litter upon us.

I cannot say how many hours we remained thus; it is impossible to measure time in such a situation. It is probable that we spent the day in the grotto, our captors not daring to march except by night. I do not know what Luigi felt, but as for me, I burned with fever and my hunger and thirst were extreme. At last the litter was again opened. This time we were not unbound; they simply took the gags from our mouths. As soon as I could speak I asked for drink; they put a glass to my lips. I emptied it at a gulp, and then they re-gagged me as before.

I had not taken time to taste the drink they had given me, which was like wine, though it had a

curious taste that I did not know ; but whatever the liquor was it refreshed me ; moreover, I presently felt a calmness that I should have thought impossible in a situation like mine. This calmness was not without a certain charm. I believed I saw, although my eyes were bandaged, luminous phantoms passing before me and saluting me with gentle smiles. Little by little I fell into a state of apathy that was neither sleeping nor waking. I fancied that airs, forgotten since my youth, were murmuring in my ears ; from time to time I beheld bright gleams crossing like flashes of lightning the darkness of the night ; and I saw rich palaces brilliantly illuminated, and beautiful meadows all covered with flowers. Presently I felt myself taken up and carried into a bower of oleanders and honeysuckle, where I was laid on a mossy bank and saw above my head the beauteous starry sky. Then I began to laugh at the fears I had felt when I thought myself a prisoner ; I saw my child, who ran joyfully up to me ; only, singular thing ! it was not the living child, but the dead one. I took him in my arms ; I questioned him about his absence ; he told me that one morning he awoke with angel's wings and rose towards heaven ; but when he saw me weep so much he had asked God to let him come back to earth. Finally, all these things became, little by little, indistinct, and confused with one another ; then I fell, almost without transition, into a heavy, deep, dark, dreamless sleep.

When I woke we were in the cave where we are to-day ; I free, Luigi chained to the wall. A table stood between us ; on this table was a lamp, some

food, wine, water, and glasses; against the wall the remains of a fire by means of which Luigi's chain had been riveted. Luigi was sitting, his head on his two knees, plunged in such deep grief that I roused myself, rose, and went to him without his hearing me. A sob, which escaped my breast against my will, drew him from his dejection. He raised his head and we fell into each other's arms.

It was the first time since our abduction that we were able to exchange our thoughts. Like me, though he had not distinctly recognized Cantarello, he was convinced that we were his victims. They had given him, as they had to me, a narcotic drink which made him lose all sensation, and he had only just wakened when I woke myself.

The first day we could not eat. Luigi was gloomy and mute; I sat, weeping, beside him. After a time our sorrow softened at the thought that we were still together. At last the need for food came so violently that we ate; then followed sleep. Life went on for us, without liberty, without daylight. Luigi had a watch. During our journey it had stopped either at midday or at midnight; he wound it up; it did not tell us the real time, but at least it gave us an imaginary time by the help of which we could measure actual time.

We had been seized and carried off on the night of a Tuesday to Wednesday. We calculated that we had waked up on Thursday morning. At the end of twenty-four hours we made a line on the wall with a piece of the charred stone. One day had thus gone by; it was now Friday. Twenty-four hours

later we drew another line; it was now Saturday. At the end of the same time we drew another line, but longer than the first two; that line marked Sunday.

We spent that holy day of our Lord in prayer.

Eight days went by thus. At the end of those eight days we heard steps that seemed to be coming down a long corridor. These steps came nearer and nearer; our door opened. A man enveloped in a large cloak entered, holding a lantern in his hand; it was Cantarello.

I held Luigi in my arms; I felt him tremble with anger. Cantarello approached us, and I felt Luigi's muscles contract and distend successively. I was certain that if Cantarello came within the length of the chain Luigi would bound upon him like a tiger and there would be a mortal struggle between the two men. There came to me then a thought I should have supposed impossible — that I might be more wretched than I really was. I called out to him to come no nearer. He comprehended the cause of my fear; without replying he opened his cloak and showed me that he was armed. Two pistols were in his belt and a sword hung at his side.

He placed upon the table fresh provisions; these, like the first, consisted of bread, smoked meats, wine, water, and oil. The oil was especially precious to us; it was light for our lamp. I knew now that light was one of the first needs of man.

Cantarello went out and closed the door without any other words having passed but those I had said to prevent him from approaching Luigi, and without

his making any sign beyond the gesture that showed me he was armed. It was then that, feeling certain I was released from my oath, I for the first time told all to Luigi. When I had finished speaking he sighed deeply.

"He means to make sure of our silence," he said. "We are here for the rest of our lives."

A burst of laughter came from behind the door. Cantarello had stopped there; he had listened and heard all. We knew then that we had no hope but in God and in ourselves.

We began, after this, to make a careful inspection of our dungeon. It is a species of cellar ten feet wide and twelve feet long, with no other issue than the door. We sounded the walls; they seemed to us solid. I went to the door and examined it; it was of oak and secured by two locks. There was little chance of escape, and besides, Luigi was chained round the waist and by one foot.

Nevertheless, for nearly a year hope never abandoned us altogether; for that whole year we meditated on every possible means of escape. Every week, punctually, Cantarello brought us our weekly provisions. Strange! little by little we grew so accustomed to his visit that, whether from resignation or from the need of an instant's relief to our solitude, we ended by looking forward to his coming with a sort of impatience. Besides, hope, which can never be extinguished, made us always believe that Cantarello at his next visit would have pity on us. But time went by; Cantarello reappeared with the same impassible and sombre face, and went away usually

without exchanging with us a single word. We continued to mark our days upon the wall.

A second year went by. Our existence became wholly mechanical ; we remained whole hours stupefied, and, like animals, we only issued from this stupefaction when the need to eat or drink roused us from our torpor. The sole thing that seriously occupied our minds was care that our lamp should not go out and we be left in darkness ; all else was indifferent to us.

One day, instead of winding up his watch, Luigi broke it against the wall ; from that day we ceased to measure hours, time no longer existed for us, it had dropped into eternity.

Nevertheless, as I had noticed that Cantarello came regularly every eight days, I made a mark upon the wall each time he came, and that replaced in some degree our watch ; but I, too, wearied of this useless count, and after a while I ceased to mark our gaoler's visits.

An indefinite time elapsed ; it lasted several years. I became pregnant.

This was a very joyous and very painful feeling both. To become a mother in a dungeon ; to give life to a human being without giving it light as well ; to see the child of one's womb, a poor innocent creature not born as yet, condemned to a torture that was killing us !

For our child's sake we returned to God, whom we had almost forgotten. We had prayed to him so long for ourselves and he had not answered, that we had come to believe he did not hear us ; but now

we prayed to him for our child, and it seemed to us that our voice must pierce to the very bowels of the earth.

I said nothing to Cantarello. I was afraid, I know not why, lest this news might inspire him with some dark design against us or against our child. One day he found me sitting on my bed and suckling my child. At that sight he quivered, and it seemed to me that his harsh face softened. I threw myself at his feet.

“Promise me that my child shall not be buried forever in this dungeon, and I will forgive you,” I said to him.

He hesitated a moment, then, passing his hand over his forehead, he said, “I promise it.”

At his next visit he brought what was necessary to clothe my child. Meantime I was fading away visibly. One day Cantarello looked at me with an expression of pity I had never before seen on his face.

“You will never,” he said, “have strength to suckle that child.”

“Ah !” I replied, “you are right ; I feel that I am almost extinct. It is air I want.”

“Will you come out with me ?” asked Cantarello.

“Out ! and leave Luigi and my child ?”

“They will stay here to answer for your silence.”

“Never !” I said, “never !”

Cantarello took up in silence his lantern which he had placed upon the table, and went away.

I know not how many hours we remained without speaking, Luigi and I.

"You did wrong," said Luigi at last.

"Why should I go out?" I asked.

"You could have seen where we are; you would have noticed where he took you; you might have found some way to reveal our existence and obtain for us the pity of men. You did wrong, I tell you."

"Very well," I answered, "if he speaks of it again I will go."

And we dropped back into our habitual silence.

Eight days went by. Cantarello appeared; besides our usual provisions he brought a rather large package.

"These are men's clothes," he said; "when you decide to come out, put them on; I shall know what that means and I will take you with me."

I did not answer; but at his next coming Cantarello found me clothed as a man.

"Come," he said.

"One moment," I cried. "Will you swear to bring me back?"

"In one hour you will be here again."

"I follow you."

Cantarello walked before me, locked the first door, and I saw we were in a corridor. In this corridor was a second door, which he opened and then locked; we mounted ten or twelve steps and came face to face with a third door. Cantarello turned to me, drew a handkerchief from his pocket, and bandaged my eyes. I let him manage me like a child; I felt so completely in that man's power that even a remark seemed to me useless.

After I was blindfolded he opened the third door, and I knew that we were entering another atmosphere. We made forty steps on a pavement, some of which resounded as if they covered cellars, and I judged we were in a church. Then Cantarello let go my hand and opened another door. This time I felt by the impression of the air that we were out of doors, and without giving time for Cantarello to uncover my eyes, without reflecting on the consequences that might come of my impatience, I tore off the handkerchief.

I fell upon my knees, so beautiful did the world seem to me! It must have been about four in the morning; day was beginning to break; the stars were disappearing one by one in the sky; the sun was about to rise behind a chain of little hills. I had before me a vast horizon; to my left, ruins, to my right, meadows and a river; before me a town; beyond that town the sea.

I thanked God for having permitted me to see once more these beautiful things which, notwithstanding the twilight, dazzled me so much that I was forced to close my eyes, so weakened was my sight by the gloom of our dungeon. During my prayer Cantarello closed the door. It was that of a church, as I had thought; but to me an unknown church; I was perfectly ignorant of the place I was in.

No matter; I forgot not the slightest detail; and this was easy, for the whole landscape was reflected in my soul as in a mirror.

We waited till the sun had risen; then we walked

towards a village. On the way we met two or three persons who saluted Cantarello with an air of acquaintance. On reaching the village we entered the third house on our right. At the farther end of the room, near the bed, sat an old woman spinning; near the window was a young woman, about my own age, who was knitting; a child, two or three years old, was rolling on the floor. These women seemed accustomed to see Cantarello; yet I remarked that not once did they call him by name. My presence astonished them. In spite of my clothes, the young woman recognized my sex, and made a few jokes about it in a low voice to my conductor. "He is a young priest," he said in a stern tone, — "a young priest, a relative of mine, who is moped at the seminary; and from time to time I take him out with me to amuse him."

As for me, I must have seemed besotted to those who looked at me. A thousand confused ideas were jostling in my mind; I asked myself whether I had better cry out for help, tell all, and denounce Cantarello as thief and murderer. Then I checked myself, reflecting that every one seemed to know and respect him, while I was unknown; I should be taken for some madwoman escaped from a cell, and no attention would be paid to me; or, if it happened otherwise, Cantarello might flee, might rush through the church and cut the throats of my husband and child. He had said they should answer for my conduct. Besides, how could I find them without him? The door through which we had left the church might be so secret, so well hidden that it would be,

perhaps, impossible to discover it. I resolved to wait; to take counsel with Luigi, and decide without rash haste what we had better do.

After a few minutes, Cantarello took leave of the two women, passed his arm under mine, went down a little alley to the banks of a stream, followed it for a mile along its course which brought us out near to the church; then, making a circuit, he took me under the porch through which we had come out. There he blindfolded me, opened the door, and closed it behind us. Again I counted forty steps. Then the second door opened; I felt the cold, damp impression of an underground place. I went down twelve steps; we reached the third door; then the fourth; it creaked on its hinges; Cantarello pushed me, still blindfolded, into the cellar and closed the door behind me. I tore off the bandage and found myself again with Luigi and my child.

I wanted to tell Luigi at once all that I had seen; but he made me a sign with his finger on his lips that Cantarello might be listening behind the door to hear what we should say. I sat down on the mattress that served as my bed and nursed my child.

Luigi was not mistaken; at the end of an hour or thereabouts, we heard steps departing softly. Wearied by our silence, Cantarello had doubtless decided to wait no longer. Nevertheless, in spite of this appearance of solitude we did not think ourselves safe as yet; we waited several hours longer, and then I went to Luigi's side and in a low voice told him all that I had seen, without omitting a single detail, or forgetting a single circumstance.

Luigi reflected a moment ; then asking me in his turn certain questions, to which I answered affirmatively, he said :

“ I know where we are ; these ruins are those of the Epipolæ ; that river is the Anapus ; this town is Siracusa ; and this chapel is that of the Marchese di San Floridio.”

“ Oh, my God ! ” I exclaimed, remembering the old history of a Marchese de San Floridio who, in the days of the Spaniards, had passed ten years in a subterranean retreat so carefully hidden that his most rabid enemies had never been able to discover it.

“ Yes, that is it,” said Luigi, comprehending my thought. “ Yes, we are in the vault of the Marchese Francesco, and as much hidden from the eyes of men as if we were in our tomb.”

I then understood how fortunate it was that I had not yielded to the impulse that prompted me to cry for help.

“ Well ? ” said Luigi, after a long silence, “ have you any hope ? have you formed any plan ? ”

“ Listen,” I said. “ One of those two women, the youngest, looked at me with interest ; it is she to whom we must contrive to tell who we are and where we are.”

“ How can that be done ? ”

I went to the table and took two pieces of white paper in which fruit was wrapped.

“ We must,” I said, “ put aside and conceal all the paper we can get hold of from this time on ; I will write upon it our miserable story, and some day,

when I am taken out I will give it to that young woman."

"But if, in spite of that, they cannot find the entrance to the cellar, if Cantarello, being arrested, keeps silence, we shall still remain buried in this tomb."

"Would it not be better to die than to live thus?"

"But our child?" said Luigi.

I gave a cry and darted to my child. God forgive me! I had forgotten it; its father was the one who remembered it!

It was settled that I should follow the plan I proposed; only, I must be careful to forget nothing that could guide a search. After this, we let time elapse, but this time with impatience, for a gleam of hope was on the horizon, distant as it was. In order not to awaken Cantarello's suspicions, I was forced to hide my ardent desire to go out again. He, on his side, seemed to have forgotten what he had offered me. Four months went by without my saying a word; but I fell back into a state of marasmus so evident that one day, finding me lying on my mattress without strength to move and pale as death, he said:

"If you wish to go out in a week from now, get yourself ready and I will take you."

I had strength enough not to show the joy I felt at this proposal; I merely made him a sign with my head that I would obey him.

During the time that had elapsed since my first out-going, we had put aside all the paper we could

lay hands on, and there was now enough on which to write the detailed history of our misfortunes.

On the day named Cantarello found me ready. As on the first occasion, he walked before me to the second door; there he bandaged my eyes. After that all happened as before; at the door of the church I took off the bandage. We came out at nearly the same hour as the first time; it was the same scene, the same sight, and yet, strange to say, I thought it less beautiful. We walked to the village and entered the same house. The two women were there as before, one spinning, the other knitting. On a table was an inkstand and pens; I leaned against the table and slipped a pen into my pocket. During this time Cantarello talked with the young woman in a low voice. It was of me they spoke, because she kept looking at me in speaking. I heard her say to him: "He does not get used to the seminary, your young man; for he is sadder and paler than the last time you brought him." As for the old woman, she did not say a word and never lifted her eyes from the spinning-wheel; she seemed to be an idiot.

At the end of about ten minutes Cantarello put my arm, as before, under his, took the same alley, and went down to the bank of the little river. While we followed this path I said to Cantarello that I should like to have needles and cotton for knitting; and he promised to bring them. As we returned towards the church I noticed that we must be nearly at the end of autumn; the harvest was over, so was the vintage. I understood then why

Cantarello had not taken me out for four months. He waited till the labourers had quitted the fields.

At the door of the church he bandaged my eyes. I entered, led by him and making no resistance. I counted the forty steps and then we stopped. I comprehended that during this pause Cantarello was searching in his pocket for the key. I heard him feeling along the wall for the lock; I knew his back must be turned to me; I lifted my bandage quickly and as quickly replaced it. It was but a second, but that second sufficed. We were in the chapel to left of the altar; the door in the wall must be between the two pilasters.

That is where the entrance must be looked for until it is found; for it is precisely and positively there.

Cantarello saw nothing. The two doors opened successively before us, and as the third closed behind me I found myself again in our dungeon. Luigi and I preserved the same silence as before; and it was not till I thought it impossible that Cantarello should still be there that I drew the pen from my pocket and showed it to Luigi. He made me a sign to hide it, and I slipped it under my mattress. Then I sat down beside him and whispered every detail of my excursion. The discovery I had made of the position of the secret door in the church was a precious circumstance, and with the precise information I was now able to give, it was certain that a searcher could find the lock, and the lock once discovered the way was direct to us.

I let one day pass without attempting to write,

but I took one of our tin cups, and in it I diluted in water some of the black soot that remained on the calcined wall ; then I dipped my pen in the mixture and found to my great joy that it served me well in place of ink.

The next day, after invoking God and the Madonna, I began to write this manuscript, which contains an exact recital of our unhappy fate, and the very humble, very urgent prayer to any Christian into whose hands it may fall, to come as soon as possible to our rescue.

In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, so be it ! ”

[A cross was drawn below these words ; after which the manuscript continued ; but the form of the narrative was changed ; it was now of the present and not of the past. In place of the recollections of six or eight years, it was a daily record, notes and passing impressions jotted on the paper at the moment they were thought or felt.]

“To-day Cantarello came as usual ; besides the ordinary provisions he brought the cotton and the knitting-needles which he had promised me. The manuscript and the pen were hidden, the tin cups were rinsed and clean upon the table. He perceived nothing. O my God ! protect us.

Three weeks have gone by ; Cantarello says nothing of taking me out again. Can he suspect something ? Impossible. To-day he stayed longer than

usual and he looked me in the face. I felt myself reddened as if he had read my hope upon my forehead ; then I took my child in my arms and rocked it, singing, so troubled was I.

“Ha ! you sing,” he said ; “you think yourself not so badly off as I supposed you did.”

“It is the first time I have done so since we have been here.”

“Do you know how long you have been in this subterranean place ?”

“No,” I answered ; “the first two or three years I kept count of the days ; but I saw it was useless and I ceased to take the trouble.”

“You have been here nearly eight years,” said Cantarello.

I sighed ; Luigi uttered something like a roar of rage. Cantarello turned round, looked at him with contempt, and shrugged his shoulders. Then, without a word about taking me out, he went away.

So it is eight years that we have lived locked up in this cellar. O my God ! my God ! you heard it from his own lips. Eight years ! What have we done to suffer thus ? Nothing ; you know that well, my God !

Santa Maria del Rosario, pray for us !

Oh ! listen to me, hear me, you, whose name I do not know ; you, my only hope ; you, woman like me, mother like me, have pity on my sufferings, hear me, listen to me !

Cantarello has just gone out. Two months and a half have gone by since he spoke to us ; but to-day

he offered to take me out a week hence ; I agreed. In eight days he will come and take me ; in eight days my fate will be in your hands ; your eyes, your words, your whole person seemed to show interest in me. My sister in Jesus Christ, do not abandon me !

You will find this history near you after I leave your room. On my eternal salvation, on the grave of my mother, on the head of my child, I swear it is the truth, the pure truth, — that which I shall tell to God when he calls me to him ; and to each of my words the angel who accompanies my soul to the foot of his throne will say, shedding tears of pity :

“ Lord God, it is true ! ”

Listen to me therefore. As soon as you have read this manuscript, go to the judge ; tell him that a mile away from him, three miserable beings have been buried alive for eight years — a husband, a wife, a child. If Cantarello is your relation, your ally, your friend, say nothing more than that to the judge, and I swear to you, on the Madonna, that once out of this tomb not a word of accusation shall pass my lips ; I swear it on this cross which I draw, and may God punish me in my child if I fail to keep my sacred promise !

Tell him nothing but this : “ Three human beings, more miserable than any creatures ever were before, are close beside us ; we can save them ; take levers, crowbars ; there are four doors, four massive doors to break through before we can reach them. Come, I know where they are, come ! ” And if he hesitates, fall at his knees as I fall now at yours, and implore him as I am now imploring you. Then he will come,

for where is the man, where is the judge who will refuse to save three of his fellow-beings, — especially when they are innocent? He will come; you must walk before him and lead him straight to the church.

You must open the door; you must lead the judge to the chapel on the right, that in which there hangs above the altar a Saint Sebastian pierced with arrows. When you reach the altar — listen to me — there are two pilasters to your left; the door must be between those two pilasters. Perhaps you cannot find it at first; it is wonderfully hidden, so it seemed to me; perhaps on striking against the wall the wall may not reveal an opening, for — remember this — the wall itself forms the entrance to these subterranean caverns; but the entrance is there, be sure of it, and do not allow yourselves to be disheartened. If the door escapes your search, light a torch, put it close to the wall; I tell you that you will end by finding some imperceptible lock, some invisible chink, which is there. Rap, rap; perhaps we shall hear you, know you are there, and that will give us the courage of hope. You will know that we are behind that wall awaiting you, praying for you; yes, for you, for the judge, for all our liberators whoever they may be — yes, I will pray for them all the days of my life as I am praying now.

It is quite clear, is it not, — all that I have told you above? In the church of the Marchese di San Floridio, the chapel to the right, that of Saint Sebastian, between the two pilasters. Oh! my God, my God! I tremble so in writing this to my deliverer, that I know not if it can be read.

I would I knew your name, to repeat it again and again in my prayers. But God, who knows all, knows that it is for you I pray, and that is all that is needed.

Good God! something has happened such as never happened before since we have been here. Cantarello came two days running. Has he been followed? Does he suspect anything? Has any one a suspicion of our existence? Is search being made for us? Oh! if there be some succour, some human being who is helping us, help him, O Lord! come to his aid!

Cantarello entered at a moment when we least expected him. Happily these papers were hidden. He entered and looked about him on all sides; he struck the walls; then, feeling sure that all things were in their usual state he said to me: "I have returned because I think I forgot to tell you that, if you wish, I will take you out with me next week."

"I thank you," I replied, "you told me so."

"Ah! I told you, did I?" said Cantarello, with an absent air, "very good; I took unnecessary pains in coming back."

Then he looked about him again, sounded the wall in two or three places, and went away. We heard him go to the other door and lock it. Then, ten minutes later, or thereabouts a species of detonation was heard, like that of a pistol or musket shot. Is it a signal made to us? Can it be, as we have hoped, that some one is watching over us?

For four or five days nothing new has happened ; as far as I dare to trust my own calculation, to-morrow Cantarello will fetch me ; to-morrow this paper will reach your hands, O my deliverer ! Probably I shall add nothing to this narrative, nothing to this last supplication that I address to you — do not abandon us to our despair !

O, charitable soul ! have pity upon us !

My God ! my God ! what has happened ? Either I am mistaken — and it is impossible I should be mistaken by two whole days — or the day when Cantarello always comes has passed, and Cantarello has not come. I judge, moreover, by our provisions, which he never failed to replenish on every eighth day ; they are finished, and he comes not. My God ! are we reserved for something even worse than we have suffered up till now ? My God ! I dare not say even to you what I fear, such terror have I lest the echoes of this abyss should answer : Yes !

Oh ! my God, are we destined to die of hunger ?

Time goes by — time goes by — he comes not ; not a sound is heard. My God ! we consent to stay here eternally, never to see again the light of heaven ; but our child ! He promised to release my child, my poor child !

Where is he, that man whom I never saw without horror, and whom I now long for as a saviour god ? Is he ill ? O Lord, restore him to health ! Is he dead without having time to leave to others the hor-

rible secret of our tomb? Oh! my child, my poor child!

Happily my child has my milk and suffers less than we do — but without food, my milk will dry; only one bit of bread remains to us, one only. Luigi says he is not hungry and gives it to me. Oh! my God, be witness that I eat it for my child — my child, to whom I will give my blood when my milk fails.

Oh! — something worse! something more dreadful still! the oil is exhausted, our lamp is going out; the darkness of the tomb before our death! the lamp, the light that was life; darkness that will be death — and agony besides!

Oh! now, since there is no more hope for our bodies, you, whoever you be that will descend into this awful tomb — God! the lamp is going out! — pray, pray for our souls.”

The manuscript ended there; the last four words were written crookedly; they must have been added in the dark. What happened after, no one knows but God; the death struggle must have been awful.

The piece of bread given by Luigi to his wife prolonged her life by nearly two days, for the doctor declared there must have been an interval of thirty-six to forty hours between the death of the husband and that of the wife. This prolongation of the life

of the mother had prolonged that of the child ; thus of these three hapless beings the weakest alone survived.

The reading of this manuscript was done in the vault itself, mute witness of the deaths of Luigi and Teresa. It left no doubt or obscurity whatever on the events that had taken place ; and when Don Ferdinando had added his testimony, the whole matter became clear and intelligible to the minds of all.

On his return to the village Ferdinando found the child already better ; he immediately sent a messenger to Feminamorta to learn what had become of the first child of Luigi and Teresa. It was still with the worthy couple to whom it had been intrusted ; and its board had been punctually paid by some unknown person, doubtless, Cantarello. Don Ferdinando, with the consent and approval of his father, declared that henceforth his family would take charge of the two unfortunate orphans and provide for them and also for the obsequies of Luigi and Teresa ; besides which, the Marchese di San Floridio, who was proud of his son's brave enterprise, established a perpetual fund for masses for the repose of their souls.

VIII

A SHARK. PANTELLARIA

WE had now seen in Syracuse all that Syracuse offered of interest ; we had only to make provision of the necessary wines, to which important acquisition we devoted the evening ; at the close of which we sent our casks on board the speronara, following them ourselves after embracing our learned and amiable count, who at parting gave us letters for Palermo.

We found our ship's company, as usual, joyous, nimble, and ready to sail ; all of them, even our cook, had profited by the two days' rest to recover themselves. Cama awaited us on deck, anxious to cook our supper ; for the poor devil, it must be said, was full of good-will, and as soon as he could stand upon his legs he made for his saucepans. Unfortunately, we had dined with Gargallo, which left us no possibility of profiting by his eagerness as to supper. Upon our refusal, he fell back on Milord, who, always ready, now swallowed, with suitable admixture of bread and potatoes, the succulent macaroni intended for Jadin and me.

We had left the captain suffering somewhat from rheumatism in the loins ; willing or unwilling, I was forced to play doctor, and I ordered friction with camphorated brandy. The captain had used that

remedy once, and, whether it was imagination or reality, he declared that he felt better and promised to continue the prescription.

The weather was magnificent. I have already said that nothing is finer, nothing more poetic than night on the coasts of Sicily, between that sky and that sea which seem two sheets of azure embroidered with gold. So we stayed rather late upon deck playing at some sort of game invented by the crew, in which the loser was compelled to drink a glass of wine. Needless to say that after two or three lessons we became more skilful than our masters, and that they lost perpetually; Pietro especially was desperately unlucky.

Towards midnight we retired to our cabin, leaving the deck to the captain, who had arranged a species of platform on which he lay flat on his stomach to give more facility to Giovanni in executing the prescription I had given him for rheumatism. We were scarcely in bed before we heard a piercing cry. We rushed, Jadin and I, to the door, arriving in time to see the deck covered with flames; and out of those flames came a species of devil, all fire, who, with one bound, sprang over the bulwark and was lost in the depths of the sea; while a companion devil, whose arm alone was burning, rushed about the deck howling like a soul in torment and calling for help. For an instant we stood, like the crew, comprehending nothing of this scene; then Nunzio's head appeared above the cabin and gave the order:

“Down sail, and wait the captain; he is in the sea.”

The order was executed instantly, and with that passive exactitude which is the peculiar characteristic of the obedience of sailors. The sail glided down the mast and lay on the deck; instantly the little vessel stopped, like a bird with a broken wing, and we heard the voice of the captain calling for a rope; a moment later, thanks to that article, he appeared on board. Then all was explained.

For the greater efficacy of my remedy Giovanni had warmed the camphorated brandy, and armed with a flannel glove he was rubbing the captain's loins, when his hand, in making its journey from the dish that held the liquid to the spinal column of the captain, caught fire at the lamp which was lighting the operation; the flame was instantaneously communicated from the hand of the operator to the neck of the patient, and from the neck of the patient to all the other parts of his body moistened by the specific. The captain felt himself burning with the same fires as Hercules, and to put them out rushed to the nearest bulwark and plunged into the sea. It was he who had uttered the cry we had heard, and it was he whom we had seen shoot past like a meteor. As for his companion in misfortune, poor Giovanni, whose arm, imprisoned in its flannel bag, burned from the tips of the nails to its elbow, he was rushing about the deck wildly and yelling like a maniac.

Inspection made of the injured parts, it was seen that the captain's back was fried, and Giovanni's hand half-roasted. All the carrots on board were instantly grated, a circular compress of the pulp was

made for Giovanni's fist, and a cataplasm three feet long for the captain's back ; then the latter lay down to sleep on his stomach, Giovanni on his side, we as we pleased, the crew as they could, and order was restored.

When we awoke we were doubling the promontory of Passero, once Cape Pachinum, the sharpest angle of ancient Trinacria. This was the first time I had found Virgil in fault. His *altas cautes projectaque saxa Pachini* were not there ; on the contrary, we saw a low coast sloping gradually down into the sea. Since the day that the author of the *Æneid* wrote his third canto, it is true that *Ætna* has made so many scenes that the levelling which contradicts the harmonious hexameter of the poet may very likely have been her work ; this supposition, be it said, is made without offence.

The wind had fallen ; the men were rowing ; the speronara hugged the shore at a distance of half a mile, which enabled us to follow with our eyes its ups and downs and all its sinuosities. From time to time we were distracted from our contemplation by some passing gull, at which we fired a shot, or by some dory rising to the surface of the water, at which we flung the harpoon. The sea was beautiful and so transparent that the eye could plunge to an almost infinite depth. Now and then in that azure abyss a silvery flash would suddenly shine ; 't was a fish of some kind striking the water a blow with its tail and disappearing, frightened, at our passage. One only, that seemed about the size of an ordinary pike, followed us at an

incalculable depth, almost without movement, as if rocked by the water. I had kept my eyes on this fish for nearly ten minutes when Jadin, seeing my close attention, joined me, to know what caused it. I showed him my finny friend, which at first he had some difficulty in perceiving; after that, he saw him as plainly as I did. Presently there happened what happens in Paris when any one stops on a bridge and looks into the river. Pietro, who was passing with half a dozen cutlets destined to be the solid dish of our breakfast, stopped, came up to us, and following the direction of our eyes succeeded in seeing the object that attracted them; but, to our great astonishment, the sight seemed to make so disagreeable an impression upon him that I hastened to ask him what fish it was that followed us so obstinately. Pietro contented himself with wagging his head. After remarking, "That's a bad fish," he continued his way to the kitchen and disappeared down the hatchway. As that reply was far from satisfying us, we called the captain, who was just then appearing on deck, and without taking time to inquire for his rheumatism, we repeated our question. He looked for an instant, and then, with a gesture of disgust, he said: "C'è un cane marino," and made a motion to go away.

"The deuce, captain," I said, "you look disgusted. *Un cane marino*? — but that's a shark, is n't it?"

"Not precisely," replied the captain, "but a fish of the same species."

"Then this must be the diminutive of a shark," said Jadin.

"He is not as large as they are sometimes," replied the captain, "but he's six or seven feet long."

"You are joking, captain!" cried Jadin.

"That is the exact truth."

"Tell me, captain," I said, "is n't there some way to fish him?"

The captain shook his head.

"Our men would not do it," he replied.

"Why not?"

"That's a bad fish."

"All the more reason to get rid of him."

"No; we have a Sicilian proverb, that every ship that takes a shark from the sea gives a man to the sea."

"But, at least, couldn't we see him a little nearer?"

"Oh! that's easy enough; throw him something and he'll come."

"But what?"

"Anything you like; he's not proud; from a bundle of candles to a veal cutlet, he'll take it."

"Jadin, don't lose sight of that animal; I'll be back."

I ran to the kitchen, and in spite of Giovanni's outcries, I took a chicken he had just plucked and trussed for our dinner. As I put my foot on the ladder to return I heard deep sighs, and looking round, saw Cama, again the victim of seasickness. Hearing that a shark was following us, he imagined,

with the superstition of the race, that he was after his dead body. I tried to reassure him, but seeing that I lost my time, I returned to my dog-fish.

He was still in the same place, but the captain had quitted his and gone to talk to the pilot, leaving the field free to us, curious as he must have been to see what would happen between ourselves and the shark. The four rowers had left their oars and were leaning on the bulwark at a few steps from us, apparently discussing the important affair that was going on.

The shark was still motionless and kept himself at about the same depth. I fastened a stone of our ballast to the neck of the chicken and flung it into the water in the direction of the shark. The chicken sank slowly, and reached a depth of about twenty feet before the fish appeared to take the slightest notice of it; then I thought I saw him visibly enlarge. As the chicken went down he was rising to meet it. At last, when they were only a few feet from each other, the shark turned over on his back and opened his jaws, into which the chicken disappeared incontinently. As for the stone I had attached to its neck to carry it down, that did not seem to inconvenience our guest; on the contrary, he continued to rise and therefore to enlarge. At length he came to within a few feet of the surface of the water, and we could see the truth of what the captain told us; our fancied pike was nearly seven feet long!

Then, in spite of the captain's representations, the desire seized me to catch that shark. I called Gio-

vanni, who, thinking we were impatient for our breakfast, appeared at the top of the ladder, cutlets in hand. I explained to him that the matter was something very different, and I asked him to go and get his harpoon, promising him a louis if he managed to catch that fish. But Giovanni merely shook his head, put our cutlets on a chair, and departed saying :

“ Oh ! Excellency, that ’s a bad fish.”

I knew my Sicilians too well by this time to hope to conquer a repugnance universally manifested ; but not venturing to trust my own skill in throwing a harpoon, and not having a fly on board of sufficient size to catch such a monster, I determined to have recourse to our guns. Leaving Jadin on the watch, telling him if the shark showed signs of going away to entice him with the cutlets (near to which Milord was sitting, glancing at them sideways with an air of concupiscence impossible to describe), I hurried into the cabin to change the charge in my gun, slipping two cartridges into each barrel ; as for the carbine, it was already loaded with slugs. Then I returned to the deck. All was in the same state ; Milord watching the cutlets, Jadin watching the shark, and the shark appearing to watch us.

I gave the carbine to Jadin, and kept the gun for myself. Then we called to Pietro to throw a cutlet to the shark, intending to profit by the moment when he came to the surface of the water to fire at him ; but Pietro answered that it was offending God to feed dog-fish with veal cutlets when we gave nothing but bones to poor Melor. As this reply

was equivalent to a refusal, we resolved to do the thing ourselves. I moved the dish from the chair to the bulwark, and we agreed to fling one cutlet as a bait, and not to fire until a second was thrown, so that the fish, being thoroughly enticed, should have no distrust of us ; the play then began.

It all went off as we expected. Scarcely had the first cutlet touched the water when the shark came towards it with a single motion of his tail, and, renewing the manœuvre which had succeeded so well in regard to the chicken, he turned up his silvery belly, opened his large jaws furnished with two rows of teeth, and absorbed the cutlet with a gluttony which proved that if he had a habit of eating raw meat he did not despise it cooked when occasion offered.

The crew were watching our performances with feelings of pain, visibly shared by Milord, who had followed the dish from the chair to the bulwark, and was now standing on the bench gazing over it. We had gone too far by this time to hold back, so, in spite of the general disapprobation, which the respect felt for us alone restrained from being openly manifested, I took the second cutlet, and measuring the distance so as to have the shark ten feet away with his side towards me, I flung it into the sea, instantly returning my hand to the trigger of my gun to be ready to fire.

But hardly had I accomplished this movement when Pietro gave a cry, and we heard the sound of a heavy body falling into the sea. It was Milord, who had not supposed that his respect for cutlets was to

extend beyond the dish ; and seeing that we gave such largesse to an individual who, in his opinion, had no greater claims than himself, he flung himself overboard to dispute the prize with the shark.

The scene changed ; the shark, motionless, seemed to hesitate between the cutlet and Milord ; during this time Pietro, Filippo, and Giovanni sprang to the oars and beat the water with them to frighten the creature. At first we thought they had succeeded, for the shark dove down several feet ; but then, passing a fathom or so under Milord, — who, not troubling himself in the least about him, continued to swim, puffing loudly, towards his cutlet, which he never lost sight of, — the shark reappeared behind him, coming almost to the surface of the water ; then with a single motion he dashed, turning on his back as he did so, towards the dog which he regarded as his prey. At that instant our guns went off, and the shark, with one violent blow of his tail, which splashed the water up into our faces, plunged deep into the sea and disappeared, dangerously wounded no doubt, for the surface of the water, until now of a beautiful azure, was clouded with a faint tinge of blood.

As for Milord, without paying any attention to what was happening behind him, he snatched his cutlet, which he scrunched triumphantly as he made his way back to the speronara ; but there a great difficulty faced him ; it was easier to jump into the sea than to scramble on board again. But, as we know, Milord had a friend in Pietro ; in an instant the boat was in the water, and Milord in the boat.

It was there that he finished scrunching, with British phlegm, the last morsel of bone in the cutlet that had just missed costing him so dear.

His return on board was a veritable ovation ; Jadin was inclined to thrash him, in order to put a stop to his taste for hunting cutlets ; but I begged off from everything that could mar the joys of his triumph, which he bore with his usual modesty.

The whole day was spent in commenting on the event of the morning. Towards three o'clock we found ourselves in the midst of half a dozen little islands, or rather, large reefs which they call the *Formiche*. The crew proposed to me to land upon one of these rocks and dine there ; but I had already set my mind on a pretty little island which I saw about three miles off, and to which I gave the order to steer ; it was named on my map as the island of Porri.

This was a day of repugnances ; hardly had I given the order before a long conference took place between the captain, Nunzio, and Vincenzo ; then the captain came to tell us that they would steer, if we continued to require it, to the point I mentioned, but he ought to inform us that three or four months earlier they had found on that island the body of a sailor which had been washed ashore there by the sea. I asked him what had become of the body ; he said that he and his men had dug a grave and buried it properly as became Christians ; after which they had heaped upon the grave all the stones they could find on the island, which made a little mound, that we could see from where we were. Besides which, as soon as they returned to the village Della Pace,

they had caused a mass to be said for him. As the body could certainly claim nothing further, I kept to my order, and appetite beginning to make itself felt, I requested our men to take their oars. Instantly six rowers were at their posts, and we advanced almost as rapidly as under sail.

During this time, Nunzio's head appeared above the cabin roof; this was usually a sign that he had something he wished to say to us. We went nearer, and he told us that before the taking of Algiers this little island was the haunt of pirates, where they stationed themselves on the watch, swooping down like birds of prey on all the vessels that passed them. One day when he, Nunzio, was out fishing he had seen a party of these Barbary pirates capture a little yacht belonging to the Prince of Paterno, on which was the prince himself.

This event brought about an act which will show the character of the great Sicilian nobles.

The Prince of Paterno was one of the richest men in Sicily. The Barbary pirates, who knew with whom they had to do, treated him with the utmost care, and taking him to Algiers, sold him to the dey for 100,000 piastres, 600,000 francs—a mere nothing. The dey did not haggle, knowing very well that he could earn on his outlay; he paid the 100,000 piastres, sent for the Prince of Paterno, and negotiated with him as power to power. But, at the first word he said about his object, the prince replied that he never attended to money matters, and that if the dey had anything of that kind to settle with him he must arrange it with his steward.

The Dey of Algiers was not proud ; he dismissed the prince and sent for the steward. The discussion was long, but finally it was agreed that the prince's ransom and that of his suite should be fixed at 600,000 piastres, that is to say, nearly four millions of francs, payable in two instalments : 300,000 piastres at the expiration of the time necessary for the steward to go to Sicily and return with that sum, and 300,000 more in six months. It was settled also, that on the payment of the first instalment the prince and his suite should be set at liberty ; the second payment had for security merely the prince's word.

As every one sees, the Dey of Algiers had made a pretty good speculation ; he had won 3,500,000 francs at one stroke.

The steward departed and returned with his 300,000 piastres ; the Dey of Algiers, on his side, faithfully keeping his sworn word, had no sooner got the money than he declared the prince free, returned him his yacht, and for greater security gave him a safe-conduct.

The prince arrived safely in Sicily to the great joy of his vassals, who loved him much, and to whom he gave a fête on which he spent another million and a half, or about that. Then he gave an order to his steward to collect the 300,000 piastres that he still owed to the Dey of Algiers.

The second 300,000 were collected and about to be sent to their destination, when the Prince of Paterno received a stamped paper, which he sent, as usual, to his steward. This proved to be an injunction from the King of Naples to pay the sum intended for the

Dey of Algiers into the treasury of his Neapolitan majesty.

The steward announced this news to the Prince of Paterno, and the Prince of Paterno asked his steward what that meant. The steward informed the prince that the King of Naples having declared war, two weeks earlier, against the Dey of Algiers, he considered that it would be bad policy to allow his enemy to be enriched; and he also considered that it would be good policy to enrich himself. Hence the order to the Prince of Paterno to pay the rest of his ransom into the coffers of the State.

The order was imperative, and there were no means of evading it. On the other hand, the prince had given his word and would not break it. The steward, being questioned, declared that the coffers of his Excellency were empty, and could not be replenished before the next harvest.

The Prince of Paterno, as a faithful subject, paid into the hands of his sovereign the 300,000 piastres already collected for the rest of his ransom; then he sold his diamonds and silver-ware for 300,000 more, and the Dey had his money at the time agreed upon. Some persons remarked that the greatest pirate of them all was not the one who lived south of the Mediterranean.

As for the Prince of Paterno, he gave no opinion on that delicate question, and whenever people spoke to him about his adventure he always replied that he felt himself happy and honoured in being able to do a service to his sovereign.

While talking with Nunzio we were nearing the

island. It may have been about one hundred and fifty feet in circumference, entirely bare of trees, but covered with tall grasses. We cast anchor at a distance of two or three cable-lengths and lowered the boat into the water; then hundreds of birds that covered the shore flew away, screaming loudly. I sent a shot after them, and two fell.

We got into the boat, which began by putting us ashore, then it returned to the speronara for the various articles necessary for our dinner. A species of hollow rock, which had evidently served for this purpose, was turned into a chimney; and a few minutes later it presented a magnificent brazier, before which a spit, well garnished, was comfortably turning.

During these preparations we picked up our birds and examined the island. The birds were a species of gull; one of them had only a broken wing. Pietro amputated the injured limb and immediately removed the patient to the speronara, where the crew declared it could soon be tamed.

The boat that took it brought back Cama. Every time the vessel stopped, the poor devil recovered a little strength and got upon his legs as well as he could. He had seen the island, and as that was only half infringing the order not to let him land Pietro had pity on him and sent him ashore, a saucepan in each hand.

During this time we made an inventory of our island. The pirates who inhabited it had undoubtedly a strong predilection for onions, for the tall herbs we had seen from a distance, and through which

we now made our way with difficulty, were nothing else than that succulent vegetable gone to seed. Scarcely had we advanced fifty steps into this species of kitchen garden before we were all in tears. This was paying too dear for an investigation which promised little that was new for science. We returned therefore to our fire, before which the captain had set up a table and some seats. We profited by that attention, Jadin to touch up some sketches, and I to write letters to friends.

Aside from those wretched onions, I retain few memories more picturesque than that of our dinner beside the grave of the poor drowned sailor. The sea was magnificent, and the air so limpid that we could see for eight or nine miles on the mainland the smallest details of the landscape. Towards nine o'clock a delightful breeze sprang up, blowing off shore; this was just what we wanted; nothing could be better. As the coast of Sicily from Cape Passero to Girgenti offers nothing of much interest, I had told the captain that if it were possible, I desired to touch at the island of Pantellaria, the ancient Cos-syra. Chance now served us well, and the captain requested us to hurry on board. We lost no more time than was necessary to set fire to the dried onion stalks that covered the island, which in a moment was a sheet of flame.

Lighted by that huge pharos the speronara set sail and as she did so, we saluted with two gun-shots the lonely grave of the poor lost mariner.

When we woke the next morning the coasts of Sicily were scarcely visible. As the wind con-

tinued favourable we had made nearly forty-five miles during the night, that being a third of the distance we had to go. If the weather did not change, there was every probability that we should arrive very early the next morning at Pantellaria.

Towards three in the afternoon while we were lying on our mattresses smoking in great Turkish chibouques the excellent Sinaï tobacco that Gargallo had given us, the captain called us. As we knew that he never disturbed us unless for some important reason, we rose at once and went to join him on deck. Then he showed us, at a distance of about a mile and a half, a little to our right and forward, a jet of water that rose like a gushing spring to a height of a dozen feet or so above the sea. We asked him the cause of that phenomenon. It was all that remained of the famous Julia Island, the fantastic history of which I have already related. I begged the captain to make us pass as near as possible to this species of waterspout. Our desire was transmitted to Nunzio, who steered towards it, and in half an hour we were not more than a couple of hundred feet off. Even at that distance the air was impregnated with a strong odour of bitumen, and the sea was visibly boiling. I had some water drawn in a bucket and it was warm. I begged the captain to go nearer to the centre of the ebullition, and we went about a hundred feet closer; but once there, Nunzio seemed to wish to go no farther. As his wishes had usually the force of laws, we deferred to them at once and leaving the ex-island Julia to our right we lay down again and finished our pipes, while the speronara,

diverted a moment from her course, was once more headed for Pantellaria.

Towards seven in the evening we saw land before us; our sailors declared it was the island, and we went to bed with that assurance. They had not deceived us. We were roused towards three o'clock by the noise of our anchor going down; I put my nose out of the cabin and saw that we were lying in a species of port.

In the morning there were, as usual, a thousand difficulties to be met before we could step ashore. There was much question of cholera just then, and the Pantellariots saw cholera patients everywhere. They took our papers with tongs, they soused them in vinegar, they examined them with telescopes; at last, however, it was recognized that we were in a satisfactory state of health, and the authorities permitted us to set foot ashore.

It would be difficult to see anything more poverty-stricken, more miserable than the species of hamlet straggling along the shore that surrounded with a belt of dirty and decrepit houses the little harbour in which we had anchored. An inn to which they took us was so repulsive in dirt that on a promise from Pietro to cook us a good breakfast in the style of the people of the region, we started on our explorations fasting.

The principal curiosities of the place are two grottoes which are found on the mountain at a distance of about a mile and a half from the village. One, called the Fornella (stove), is so hot that we could scarcely stay in it ten minutes, and even then

our clothes were impregnated with sulphur. The other, called the Giacchio, is, on the contrary, so cold that in less than a half an hour a bottle of water freezes solid. It is needless to say that doctors have seized upon these grottoes as a double good fortune, and kill there annually, some by heat, others by cold, a certain number of patients.

As we left the Fornello, we saw Pietro in the act of skinning a kid which he had just bought for ten francs. Two trunks of olive-trees transformed into fire-dogs, and a spit of oleander, aided by a Cyclopean fire built in the angle of a rock, were to bring the whole animal, not cut up, to a state of satisfactory cooking. On a flat stone lay dried raisins, figs, and chestnuts which in default of truffles, were meant for the stuffing of the roast. Cama, who desired to cut up the kid into cutlets, legs, haunches, and filets, had been suppressed, and now, all the while deploring the inferiority of his position, was helping Pietro.

We walked on towards the glacier grotto, which we entered after having, by the advice of our guide, taken care to cool off previously. That precaution was not unnecessary; the temperature within being never higher than eight or ten degrees below zero. I came out very quickly, but I gave orders to keep our wine and water there till wanted. A few questions which we put to our guide as to the geological causes that led to this double phenomenon remained unanswered, or received such answers that I did not take the trouble to write them in my note-book.

On leaving the cold grotto our guide asked us whether we did not intend to ascend the highest

mountain on the island, on the top of which we perceived a sort of little church. We asked him what we could see from there; he said Africa. This assurance, joined to a certainty that breakfast could not be ready for at least two hours, made us reply affirmatively. Instantly, from the group of persons who surrounded us and had followed us from the village gazing at us with semi-savage curiosity, a man about thirty years of age detached himself, and gliding among the rocks disappeared behind a bit of rising land. As this disappearance, which immediately followed our consent, took my attention, I asked our guide who the man was who had just left us. He replied that he did not know him; he was probably some shepherd. I tried to question two other Pantellariots; but those worthy people talk such a strange *patois*, a mixture of Arabic and Italian, that after ten minutes of reciprocal conversation, neither side had understood a single word of what had been said.

The summit of the mountain, which is volcanic though its crater is now extinct, rises two thousand feet above the level of the sea. A path, very distinctly marked, and quite practicable, especially for those who had just climbed *Ætna*, showed that the little church I mentioned was a frequented spot of pilgrimage. Two-thirds of the way up, I saw a man whom I thought I recognized as the one who had so hastily quitted us, and who was now running across torrents, rocks, and ravines. I pointed him out to Jadin, who merely replied :

“The gentleman seems in a hurry.”

Our attendant cortège continued to follow us, although, evidently, it expected no largesse from us. So, as it asked for nothing, and we had to endure no other importunity than the annoyance of being gazed at as curious wild beasts, we made no opposition to the honour done to us. Thus our escort arrived when we did at the summit of the mountain on which stood the little chapel. By the sill of the door, was a man in the garb of a monk, evidently awaiting us, and mopping his forehead. At the first glance I recognized my skipper of rocks; then all was made clear; he had rushed on ahead to don his religious garb, and he now came forward, offering to say mass for us. As the mass, in my opinion, derives its value from itself, and not from the officiator who says it, I made a sign that I was ready to hear it. We were instantly ushered into the church. In a second the preparations were made; two of our escort offered themselves as choir-boys, and the service began.

Religion is so great a thing in itself that, whatever may be the ridiculous veil in which superstition or cupidity wraps it, it always succeeds in freeing the sublime head with which it looks to heaven, and the two hands with which it blesses earth. As for myself, I know that at the first sacred words he said, the speculating monk had disappeared, giving place, though himself was unaware of it, to a minister of the Lord. My mind turned back upon myself; I thought of my present isolation, lost, as I was, on the highest summit of an almost unknown island lying as a sort of post-house between Europe and Africa, at the mercy of men whose language I could

not understand, and having no means of recovering communication with the world but a frail vessel, that God in the midst of a storm had already succoured with one hand, while with the other he had shattered around us, like glass, frigates and three-deckers. For the quarter of an hour that the mass lasted I found myself in contact with all the beings I loved and who loved me, whichever corner of earth they inhabited. I saw in a way my whole life pass before me, and as it slowly unrolled before my eyes, all the beloved names vibrated one by one within my heart. I felt at one and the same time a deep melancholy and a sweet joy in thinking that I prayed for them while they were all unconscious of the part of the world in which I was. From this state of feeling it resulted that, when mass was over, the monk, to his great astonishment and that of the assembly who had attended divine service gratis, saw, in place of the two or three *carlinos* he expected to receive, a piastre fall bodily into his bag. It was the first time, certainly, that he was ever paid for a mass at that rate.

On leaving the little chapel, I looked about me. To left stretched Sicily like a mist. Beneath our feet was the island, lapped on all sides by the Mediterranean, calm and transparent as a mirror. Seen thus, Pantellaria had the form of an enormous tortoise sleeping on the water. As the island is not more than thirty miles in circumference, the eye can take in all details and, if need be, count the houses. The part that seemed to me most fertile and most populated is that which is known on the

island itself by the name of Oppidolo, on the north-west shore.

However, as hunger was beginning to make itself felt, my eyes, after wandering at random for some length of time, fixed themselves finally on the spot where breakfast was preparing. Though we stood at a distance of nearly two miles above that spot, the air was so limpid that we could see every motion of Pietro and his acolyte. He, on his side, saw, no doubt, that we were looking at him, for he began to dance a tarantella — interrupting it in the middle of a figure to look after the roast. Doubtless the kid was nearing its cooked point, for, after a conscientious examination of the animal, he turned round and beckoned to us to come down.

We found our table laid in a charming little bosquet of azerolas and oleanders interlaced with vines. The table consisted simply of a cloth stretched on the ground; above it rose a fine palm-tree, its long branches drooping like plumes. Our iced wine awaited us; pomegranates, oranges, honeycomb, and grapes formed a symmetrical and appetizing dessert, to the centre of which Pietro came bearing, on a plank covered with the large leaves of aquatic plants, our kid, roasted to a turn, and exhaling a marvelously appetizing odour.

As a kid weighs from twenty-five to thirty pounds, and as, no matter what our hunger, it was impossible to devour it between us, we invited Pietro to give part to the company who from the moment of our landing had done us the honour to follow us. As may well be supposed, the offer was accepted

without more ceremony than that with which it was made. We reserved for ourselves a suitable portion, as much of the meat as of the accessories with which it was stuffed; and the rest, accompanied with half a dozen bottles of Syracuse wine was offered to our suite. An Homeric repast of a most picturesque nature resulted; and that nothing might be lacking, the shepherd who sold us the kid, without remorse for having eaten it, played on a species of bagpipe, to the sound of which, while we smoked voluptuously our long Turkish pipes, two Pantellariots, by way no doubt of thanks, danced for our pleasure their national jig, which was something between the Neapolitan tarantella and the Andalusian bolero. After this we each took a cup of boiled, not filtered, coffee,—that is to say, Turkish coffee,—and went down to the village.

Arriving there, we saw the captain talking with a sort of warder of convicts, the island being used by the Italian government as a penal colony, the citadel being the prison. The man was in charge of four convicts, and as we approached we noticed, to our great astonishment, that the captain was speaking with a sort of respect to his companion and calling him “Eccellenza.” The warder, on his side, received these marks of consideration as being his due, and it almost seemed as though when the captain left him to join us, he was about to give him his hand to kiss. It will be easily understood that this little circumstance excited my curiosity; I asked the captain who the respectable old man was with whom he had the honour to be conversing

when we interrupted him. He replied that he was his Excellency the Signore Anga, commandant of the guard at Syracuse.

Now, how did Signore Anga from commandant of the guard at Syracuse become a prison warder at Pantellaria? The history was a curious one, and here it is :

During the years 1810, 1811, and 1812 the streets of Syracuse were suddenly infested by bandits, so adroit and yet so audacious that no one could set foot out of his own house after dark without being robbed and sometimes murdered. Soon these nocturnal attacks were not confined to plundering those who ventured by night into the streets, the bandits gained entrance into the best-guarded houses and even into the most carefully closed apartments, so that the forest of Bondy of discreditable memory was a place of safety in comparison with the poor town of Syracuse.

And all this went on in spite of the watchfulness of Signore Anga, commandant of the guard ; to whom, however, no blame could be laid, except that of arriving generally five minutes too late ; for no sooner was a house pillaged than he was on the spot to get a description of the thieves. Hardly had the poor unfortunates been robbed before Signore Anga was there, with his patrol, to take the description of the robbers ; scarcely had some one, still more unfortunate, been murdered before he was on the spot to raise him, receive his last confession, if he still breathed, and draw up a *procès verbal* of the terrible event. Thus every one admired the

prodigious activity of Signore Anga, while deploring, as I have said, that so active a magistrate did not push activity far enough to arrive ten minutes earlier, instead of invariably arriving five minutes too late. The whole city congratulated itself no less on being so carefully guarded, and nothing in the world would have induced it to accept any other commandant than the Signore Anga.

But still the robberies continued with ever increasing effrontery. A young officer, who lodged in the convent of Saint François, had just received some back-pay in Spanish piastres; he deposited his little treasure in a drawer of his secretary, put the key in his pocket, and went out to dinner, relying on the double security of the sacredness of the place where he lodged and the care he had taken to lock up his three hundred piastres.

On returning at night he found the lock of his secretary broken and the drawer empty. Moreover, as it rained that evening in torrents, and nothing is so repugnant to Sicilians as to get wet, the robber had taken the umbrella of the young officer.

The latter, in despair, rushed at once to see Captain Anga, whom he found just returning, in spite of the abominable weather, from one of his nocturnal expeditions, so devoted but, unfortunately, so unfruitful. In spite of his fatigue and though he was wet to the bone and muddy to the knees, he would not make the complainant wait; he took his deposition on the spot and promised that on the morrow he would send his whole brigade in pursuit of those piastres, the umbrella, and the robbers.

Three months went by and nothing was heard of robbers, umbrella, or piastres.

At the end of that time, one day when the weather was as bad as the day on which the robbery had taken place, the young officer, now the proprietor of a new umbrella, was crossing the great square of Syracuse, when he thought he saw an umbrella so exactly like the one he had lost that the fancy seized him to make acquaintance with the person who was carrying it. Consequently at the turn of the next street, he accosted the individual and asked him his way; the latter told him with much politeness. The officer then asked the name of him who had shown him such courtesy, and learned in reply that he was no other than the confidential servant of the Signora Anga, wife of the commandant of the guard.

This discovery was the more serious because the young officer had acquired a positive proof that the umbrella was actually his own. As he talked with the servant he had seen his initials engraved on a little silver shield that adorned the handle of the umbrella; evidently the robber had not wished to deprive his prize of that ornament.

The officer hastened by the shortest way to the house of the man's master; the Signore Anga was absent on official business. The officer then asked for madame, and told her that she had a thief, or at any rate a receiver of stolen goods, in her service. The Signora Anga exclaimed loudly and swore that the thing was impossible; but just then the servant came in, and the young officer getting im-

patient at denials that tended to nothing less than making him out a fool or an impostor, seized the servant by the ear, took him to his mistress, snatched from his hands the umbrella that he still held, showed her the shield, and forced her to see that the initials were his. There was no answer to make to that; mistress and servant were both much embarrassed, when the door opened and Signore Anga appeared in person.

The officer at once renewed his accusation, declaring that, the piastres having been stolen at the same time as the umbrella, and the umbrella having now been found, the piastres could not be far off. The Signore Anga, surprised at first by so plain a dilemma, seemed troubled, but soon recovering himself he answered the officer insolently and turned him out of his house.

That was a mistake : the signore's anger gave to the one robbed suspicions he would never have had without it. He rushed to the English colonel who commanded the garrison in the town ; the colonel sent for the judge, the judge, accompanied by a clerk and a commissary of police, made a descent on the Signore Anga, who, to his great humiliation, was forced to allow an examination of his premises.

The whole house had been searched without producing any result, when the young officer, who, as the interested party, was assisting the others, observed in crossing the ground-floor that it was parqueted, a very rare thing in Sicily. He struck it with his foot and it seemed to him to sound more hollow than an honest floor should sound. He

called the judge and told him his doubts; the judge sent for two carpenters. They lifted the floor and found, one after another, four cellars filled, not with umbrellas only, but with precious vases, magnificent stuffs, silver-ware bearing the arms of its owners, in short a complete bazaar.

Thus, all was explained, and the long immunity of the robbers needed no further comments. Signore Anga was at once the leader and the receiver for these traders. The sub-prior of the convent where the young man lodged was his associate. The business of that worthy monk was, above all, the sale of the articles stolen. Signore Anga was really a remarkable man who had organized his commerce on a large scale; he had establishments at Lentini, Calata-Girone, and Caltanissetta; that is to say, in the towns where great fairs were held; and yet, in spite of this active business, Signore Anga operated on so large a scale that his cellars when discovered were full to overflowing.

The monk, who was arrested, escaped, through ecclesiastical privilege, the secular arm of the law and was made over to his bishop. As no one ever saw him again, it is to be presumed that he was buried in some *in pace*, and that his skeleton will be found some day in a wall.

As for Signore Anga he was condemned to the galleys for life. Sent at first as an ordinary convict to Vallano, from there at the end of five years of good conduct, he was transferred to Pantellaria, where, having given no ground of complaint during another five years, he was raised to the rank of

warder, which he has now occupied honourably for twelve years, with the hope of rising before long to the rank of *garde-chiourme* — guard of the galleys.

That was the wish our captain expressed to him as they took leave of each other.

Before quitting Pantellaria I was curious to try an experiment. I put into the post letters I had written to my friends, all of which were dated from the island of Porri. They reached their destination exactly one year after my return to Paris: I can add nothing to that.



IX

GIRGENTI THE MAGNIFICENT

IT was seven o'clock in the evening when we again set sail ; with extreme good luck, the wind, which for the last two days had blown from the eastward, now turned southerly. But this good luck was not without certain drawbacks ; the wind, wholly African, came laden with hot puffs from the Libyan desert ; it was cousin-german to that famous sirocco of which we had had a specimen at Messina, and, like its relation, it brought extreme depression into the whole physical organization.

We had our mattresses carried to the deck ; the cabin had become suffocating. A dust of red ashes floated between us and the sky, and the sea was so phosphorescent that it seemed to roll in waves of flame ; our wake for a mile behind the speronara looked like a train of burning lava.

When things were thus, the entire crew disappeared, and the vessel, abandoned to Nunzio, whose iron body could resist everything, seemed to sail by herself. Yet I ought to say that at the slightest call of the pilot five or six heads came out of the hatchways, and the most languid arms recovered their vigour at need.

Though we were less sensitive than the Sicilians to the influence of this wind, we felt, none the less, a

certain discomfort, the effect of which was to take away our appetite; the night was therefore spent in sleeping a bad sleep, and the day in drinking lemonade.

The second day after our departure from Pantelaria, while we were still twenty-five to thirty miles from the coast of Sicily, the wind fell, and we had to return to the oars; but as each man had in his arms a remains of the sirocco, we did not accomplish more than fifteen miles in the course of the morning. Towards five in the afternoon a little southwest breeze sprang up; the pilot made the most of it by hoisting sail, and the speronara, full of good-will, began to hasten in a manner that gave us hope of arriving that evening in the harbour of Girgenti, or rather, to give its local and ancient name, the Porto Empedocle.

The hope was justified. At nine that evening we cast anchor in a little roadstead, at the farther end of which we saw the lights of a few houses; but this operation was hardly completed before we were hailed from the fortress called the Salute, and told to go to another station. Like all orders of the Neapolitan police, this one admitted of neither delay nor explanation; it was necessary to obey on the instant. We began to raise our anchor, but in the hurry of execution all the precautions, it seems, were not taken, and the cable parted. Instantly a buoy was thrown out to mark the spot, and as the officer of the Salute, paying no heed to the cause of our delay, continued to hail us, we went with full force of oars to take the place assigned to us.

This affair kept us afoot until midnight ; then, weary with the crossing we had just made, we slept an unbroken sleep until nine the next morning. The day was beautiful, and the water in the harbour so calm that Cama, already up, was making ready to go ashore ; first, to recover completely, like Antæus, on touching Mother Earth, next to buy fish from the little boats we saw coming in laden with them. Inspection made of the two or three houses that, with the help of a sign, called themselves inns, I thought the precaution of our worthy cook was not unwise, and that it would be better to breakfast on board than to risk starvation on land. In consequence, Cama, whom I authorized to do what he thought best in regard to food, risked himself on a plank laid between the speronara and the adjoining boat and thence to the shore. A moment later I saw him return with a basketful of fish on his head.

I went to announce this news to Jadin, who in such circumstances, always levied a certain tax on our still life in the interests of his art. This time I had seen from afar some gigantic red mullet, which, suitably composed with a ray and a golden dory, would afford a fine contrast of colour. Whatever desire he may have had to be lazy for another half-hour, Jadin was so afraid his fish might escape him that he hurried into his strapped trousers. While he was accomplishing that operation I showed him Cama advancing with his basket and setting foot upon the plank, when, with a loud cry, fish, basket, and cook disappeared as through a trap-door. The

still uncertain feet of poor Cama had failed him, and he had fallen into the sea ; instantly, with a movement more rapid than thought, Pietro sprang after him.

I ran to the side where the accident happened and, to my great amazement, beheld Pietro, who, instead of rescuing Cama, was collecting the scattered fish with the greatest care and replacing them one by one in the basket which was floating in the water ; the idea that Cama could not swim had never occurred to him ; consequently, supposing that the cook would take care of himself, he took care of the fries, the loss of which may have seemed to him the more deplorable of the two.

At this instant we saw poor Cama rising to the surface of the water, not swimming, but beating the sea with both hands like a drowning man. Time was precious ; he did nothing but appear and disappear. I threw off my coat to spring after him, but before I could do so Filippo was overboard in his shirt and trousers with a header straight into the spot where Cama had gone down ; five or six seconds later he reappeared holding his man by the collar of his white jacket. We wanted to throw him a rope, but he made a disdainful sign that he did not need it, and pushing Cama to the ladder he contrived to put one rung of it into his hands. Cama clung to that rung like a drowning man, and then, with a mighty effort, he managed to scramble on board. All this happened so rapidly that he had no time to lose consciousness ; he had swallowed some pints of sea-water, which it was necessary he should return to

its own element, but as the weather was suffocatingly hot his bath did him no other harm than the little evacuation just mentioned, which, in the opinion of the crew, would be very beneficial to his health.

The captain, having fulfilled all formalities, and our passports being deposited with the police, nothing opposed our making our excursion ashore; we therefore risked ourselves on the trembling plank that had nearly proved fatal to Cama, and, luckier than he, we landed safely.

We had scarcely set foot ashore when a man, who had been watching us for over an hour, came up and offered himself to be our guide. Three or four others who were hovering round, no doubt with the same intention, did not attempt to put themselves in competition when they saw him take from his pocket a medal which he showed us. This medal bore on one side the arms of Agrigentum, which are three giants each bearing a castle with this device: *Signet Agrigentum mirabilis aula gigantum*, and on the other side the name of Antonio Ciotta. In fact, Signore Antonio Ciotta was the official guide of the region, and he immediately began his functions by walking in front of us and telling us to follow him.

Girgenti itself stands at a distance of five miles from the shore. It is reached by a rather rapid rise which takes the traveller from the start to nearly a thousand feet above sea-level. All along the road we met mules laden with sulphur which a few years later was to lead to the famous suit between Naples and England in which the King of the French was appointed umpire. The road smelt of the trade of

which it was the artery. As the sacks containing the commodity were not well closed, a little of their contents escaped now and then, so that the road along the whole way was covered with a layer of sulphur, which in some places was three or four inches thick. As for the muleteers who accompanied the sacks, they were absolutely yellow from head to foot, which gave them a most singular aspect.

We had not yet entered the town before we knew what to think of the epithet which, with emphatic pride, Sicilians have added to its name. Girgenti the Magnificent is nothing but a dirty mass of houses built of reddish stone, with narrow streets through which no carriages can pass; these streets communicate with one another by stone stairways up which, on pain of the most disagreeable consequences, it is necessary to step in the middle. As it was evident that the rest of the day would not suffice to visit the ruins, we went in search of an inn in which to pass the night. Unfortunately, an inn is not an easy thing to find in Girgenti il Magnifico. Our friend Ciotta took us to two hovels that insolently called themselves by that name; but after a long conversation with mine host of one and the hostess of the other, we discovered that although they might possibly find us something to eat, they could not give us beds. At last, a third hostelry fulfilled both those conditions, required by us to the stupefaction of the Agrigentines, who could not conceive of such exacting demands. We hastened, therefore, to secure the chamber offered to us with the two miserable pallets that furnished it, and after ordering our dinner for six o'clock

we shook off the fleas that covered our trousers, and set forth to visit the ruins of the city of Cocalus.

I say Cocalus, trusting to Diodorus Siculus ; let this be clearly understood ; for when one comes in contact with the ultramontane *savants* one must dot one's *i*'s. An error of date, a fault of topography are of such serious consequence in the land of Virgil and Theocritus that one must needs pay-attention to avoid them. A poor inoffensive traveller puts, without thinking harm, an *a* for an *o*, or a 5 for a 6, and lo ! he disappears, and no one ever hears of him again ; his family grows uneasy, government inquires, and he is found buried under a mass of in-folios, like Tarpeia beneath the bucklers of the Sabines. If they pull him out living he escapes as fast as his legs will carry him ; more frequently he is dead, unless he is strong enough, like Enceladus, to shake *Ætna*. So I say Cocalus, just as I should say anything, without the slightest pretension to be authoritative.

Cocalus reigned in Agrigentum when Dædalus took refuge there with all the treasures he brought from Crete. Those treasures were so considerable that the celebrated architect asked permission of his host to build a palace in which to place them. Cocalus, who had plenty of waste land, told him to choose the site that suited him best and build what he liked upon it. The maker of labyrinths chose a precipitous rock, accessible at one point only, and fortified it in such a manner that four men sufficed to defend it against an army.

This occurred some years before the Trojan war. But, like those brooks that bury themselves under-

ground on leaving their springs, to rise again as rivers some leagues farther on, so the nascent city disappeared for two or three centuries in the obscurity of time, to rise again, "the most beautiful city of mortals," in Pindar's verse. In those days, if we believe Diogenes Laertius, it had a population of eight thousand souls, and, if we believe Empedocles, that population, among other defects, carried those of gluttony and pride to such lengths that they ate, he says, as though they were to die on the morrow, and built as if they were to live forever. So, as Empedocles was a philosopher, that is to say, a personage in all probability very unsociable, he left this city of cooks and masons to go and instal himself on Mount *Ætna*, where he lived on roots in a little tower that he built for himself. It is well known that one fine morning, disgusted no doubt with his new residence as he had been with his old one, he suddenly disappeared, and nothing was ever found of him but his slipper.

One hundred years earlier, as is also well known, Phalaris, charged by his fellow-citizens to build a temple to Zeus Polieus, used the enormous sums intrusted to him for that purpose to raise an army and surprise the Agrigentines. This liberticidal scheme, put in execution during the feasts of Demeter, drove the Agrigentines to despair. They made some attempts to get rid of their tyrant, but he, being a man of imagination, commanded an artist of that epoch to make him a brass bull, twice the size of life, the tail end of which could be opened by means of a key. At the end of three months the bull was finished ; in

another month a revolt broke out. Phalaris arrested the leaders, ordered a great quantity of dry wood to be piled between the legs of his animal, set fire to it, and when it was red-hot opened the monster, put in the rebels, and locked them up. As he had been careful to order the mouth of the bull to be kept open, the rebellious people who were present at the execution could hear through that issue the cries and moans of the victims, sounding like the roar of the bull himself. That style of execution, renewed about five or six times in the course of eighteen months, had the most satisfactory results. Revolts became more and more rare, until at last they ceased altogether and Phalaris reigned, thanks to his ingenious invention, tranquil and respected, for a period of thirty-one years. After his death a few critics, jealous of his fame, said his brass bull was only an imitation of the wooden horse; nevertheless, in spite of this accusation, which may have had a slight foundation of truth, the glory of the invention has remained throughout the ages entirely his own.

The epoch that followed the reign of Phalaris was the brilliant era of Agrigentum. Her people vied with one another in luxury and magnificence. A private individual named Exenetus, a victor in the games, returned to the city followed by three hundred chariots, each drawn by two white horses raised in his pastures. Another, named Gellias, had servants stationed at all the gates of the city whose mission it was to bring travellers arriving at Agrigentum to his palace, where splendid hospitality awaited them. Five hundred of Gelon's horsemen having to pass

through Agrigentum in the month of January and being taken to Gellias by his servants, they were lodged and fed by him for three days and each received a cloak on his departure. Gellias was, moreover, if we may believe tradition, a man of much wit, which did not, as one can well believe, injure the hospitality of his house. So the Agrigentines, having some interests to settle with the little town of Centuripæ, sent him there to terminate the affair. Gellias started at once and appeared before the assembly of the said Centuripæans. But as, it appears, he was only four feet six inches tall and his little figure was rather badly made, roars of laughter greeted his apparition, and one of the persons present, more impertinent than the rest, took upon himself to ask him, in the name of the Assembly, if all his co-citizens were like him. "No, gentlemen," replied Gellias; "there are some very handsome men in Agrigentum, but they are reserved for great republics and illustrious cities; to little towns and republics of no consequence men of my size are sent." This answer so dumbfounded the jesters that Gellias obtained from the Assembly all he wanted and had the glory of settling the interests of Agrigentum to the great advantage of that city.

Meantime Carthage, on the opposite coast, seeing that Agrigentum was increasing in wealth and population, became aware that she must have her for faithful friend or declared enemy in the long struggle she was just undertaking against Rome. But not only did the Agrigentines refuse the proffered alliance

with the Carthaginians, but they declared themselves their enemy. Hannibal and Hamilcar immediately crossed the sea and laid siege to the city. The Agrigentines then judged it wise to reform at least something of the luxury that had now become proverbial the wide world round; and they decided that the soldiers on guard at the citadel should have but one mattress, one covering, and two pillows. In spite of this Lacedemonian rigour Agrigentum was forced to surrender after a siege of eight years.

Then all its riches fell a prey to the victor: pictures, statues, precious vases, all was sent to Carthage. There was nothing, not even the famous brass bull of Phalaris, that did not cross the seas to embellish Dido's city. It is true that two hundred and sixty years later when Scipio, in his turn, took and pillaged Carthage, as Hamilcar had taken and pillaged Agrigentum, the brass bull returned over seas and was sold to the Agrigentines, who had an affection for him which it is difficult to account for when one examines the unpleasant relations Phalaris had forced them to have with him.

In spite of this restitution and the protection that Rome afforded her, Agrigentum never recovered from her fall, but steadily decreased until she lost even her name. To-day, Girgenti, poor beggarly daughter of a royal race, covers but a twentieth part of the soil once covered by her gigantic ancestress, and counts but thirteen thousand souls vegetating with difficulty where once a million of inhabitants lived and flourished; which does not prevent, as I have already said, that between Messina the Noble and

Palermo the Happy she pompously styles herself
Girgenti the Magnificent.

The first thing that struck us on leaving the town was the gate through which we passed, which was evidently a Saracenic construction. I resolved to begin, in presence of this monument of the Arab conquest, to put to proof the licensed knowledge of our guide; so I asked him if he could tell me to what period the gateway belonged; but the worthy Ciotta merely replied that it was very old, and as it looked badly architects were going, by order of the intendant, to pull it down and replace it by another in the Greek Doric style. I asked the name of the worthy intendant, and was told that he called himself Vaccari. May God forgive him!

We passed on our left the Rupe Atenæ, the Rock of Athene, the highest of the hills that overlooked ancient Agrigentum, on the summit of which the temple of the goddess once stood. We thought for an instant of going up there, but our guide assuring us there was nothing to be seen but a rather fine panorama, we postponed the ascension and went on to the eastern slope of the same hill, on which stood the temple of Persephone, to whom the Agrigentines vowed a special devotion. This temple is nearly as invisible as that to Athene, except that on its old foundations a little church has been erected. A hundred yards farther on flows a *fiumicello* which, after calling itself the Acragas, and the Dragon, now styles itself modestly the River Saint-Blaise: it is the one, however, that in the days of antiquity, separated ancient Agrigentum from Neapolis, or the new city.

We followed the circuit of the walls, still quite visible, and soon found ourselves at the angle of the rampart on which was built the temple of Juno Lacinia, which rises, supported by thirty-four Doric columns of the best order, above an almost perpendicular precipice. A tradition, believed by Fazzello, asserts that this is the temple to which Gellias with his family and his treasures retreated when Agrigentum was taken. According to the same tradition, the ruddy tint that colours the stones came from fire set by Gellias that burned him up, him and all his family. It is true that Diodorus Siculus, who relates the same act, says that it was done in the temple of Zeus-Atabyrius.

In this temple hung the famous picture of Hera, painted by Zeuxis, mentioned by Pliny, sung by Ariosto, for which the artist had taken as models the five most beautiful virgins in Sicily, choosing them from one hundred others who passed before him in their nude beauty. Consequently, the figure of the goddess was the quintessence of all the different perfections united in one form. At any rate, as Zeuxis had taken a fancy to this mode of working, he renewed the experiment for his Helena of Crotona and his Aphrodite of Siracusa.

In spite of the truly African sun, the stabs of which fell plumb upon our heads, Jadin sat down to make me a drawing of the temple, while I went in search of pomegranates. I soon found a bush in the middle of which there still remained a few magnificent fruits; but just as I was about to plunge in my hand I fancied I heard a hissing, and looking closer

I saw an oscillating head illumined by two ardent eyes. It was indeed a snake, which had wound itself around the stem of the shrub, and, like another dragon of the Hesperides, was preparing to defend the fruits I coveted. The blow of a stick on the shrub made him quit his post to seek refuge in the tall grasses which grew at a little distance, but before he could reach them, Milord, who had followed me, sprang upon him and broke his back with one clip of his jaws. Though mortally wounded, he again reared himself as if to bite Milord, and I blew his brains out with a pistol-shot. We measured him, Ciotta and I, and found him over five feet long. The worthy guide declared, no doubt to flatter me, that it was one of the largest he had ever seen. I gathered my pomegranates and carried them in triumph to Jadin, with Ciotta behind me, dragging the serpent by the tail.

From the temple of Juno Lacinia we passed on to that of Concord, the finest and least damaged of the two. A stone found among the ruins, and now preserved in the town-hall of Girgenti, gave this temple its name. Here is the inscription it bore, which I copied from the stone itself, leaving the words in their arrangement :

CONCORDIÆ AGRIGENTI-
 NORUM SACRUM.
 RESPUBLICA LYLIBITANO-
 RUM DEDICANTIBUS
 M. HATERIO CANDIDO PROCOS
 ET L. CORNELIO MARCELLO Q.
 PR. PR.

We began by examining the interior of this building, which is truly magnificent; it is one of the best-preserved temples of antiquity. We entered by an open door in the centre of the *pronoas*. The *cella*, thirty feet wide and ninety feet long, is perfectly preserved; two staircases are built into the corner walls, by one of which I went up easily to the top.

In 1620, the temple of Concord was converted into a Christian church and dedicated to San-Gregorio della Rupe, bishop of Girgenti. It was then that the six arched doors that open on the peristyle were made; but towards the end of the eighteenth century this wedlock of mythology and Christianity was regarded as a double profanation, artistic and religious; all trace of the modern church was removed, and if the god of antiquity should ever return, he will find his temple pretty much as it came from the hands of its unknown architect.

When I came down from the top I found Jadin still at work. I profited by his stay to let myself slide down to the foot of the ramparts and visit the tombs that were hollowed in the walls; these were receptacles for warriors, whom the Agrigentines buried in this way, that they might, though dead, still protect the town. During the siege the Carthaginians opened them and flung the ashes to the winds; but shortly after, the plague having appeared, and Hannibal, their leader, being dead, Hamilcar attributed the appearance of the scourge to this profanation, and to appease the Greek gods he sacrificed a child to Kronos [Saturn] and several priests

to Poseidon. The gods were satisfied with this reparation and one fine morning the plague went off as it had come.

I wanted to return by the way I came down, but the thing was impossible. I was obliged to skirt the ramparts for nearly five hundred yards and to re-enter through an opening that still retains the name of the Porto Aurea, which is situated between the temple of Heracles and that of Zeus. As it was getting dark I postponed my visit to those two marvels until the morrow. Half-way back to the temple of Concord I met Jadin, who had folded his baggage and was coming to meet me. We entered a street of the old city that was lined with tombs and started for Girgenti, about a mile and a half distant.

With the change of light the town itself had changed aspect; the sun, about to sink to the horizon, was setting behind Girgenti, seated at the top of her rock and vigorously defined on the fiery heavens, like those Babylonian cities of which Martin the painter dreams. To left was the African sea, calm, azured, vast; behind us the temples of Juno Lacinia and Concord, beneath our feet the antique way, still preserving the ruts of the chariot-wheels; the same ancient road trodden two thousand years ago by a vanished people whose tombs we were passing.

As we approached the town, the grandiose faded away, and Girgenti reappeared to us such as she is really, that is to say, as a confused mass of dirty and badly built houses. But even so, at three hundred steps from the gate, another illusion awaited us.

Young girls of the people were coming out to draw water from a fountain, and bearing on their heads those beautiful jars of a long shape such as we find in the drawings of Herculaneum and the relics of Pompeii. They were, as I have said, daughters of the people, in rags, but those rags were draped in a manner both simple and grand; the gesture with which they supported the amphoræ was powerful. Such as they were, half naked, not from coquetry but from poverty, they were still the daughters of Greece, degenerated, bastardized no doubt, but in whom, nevertheless, it was easy to discern some traces of the maternal type. Two among them, on our invitation conveyed through Ciotta, good-naturedly posed for Jadin, who made two sketches of them which might well be thought copies of antique paintings.

We found awaiting us at the hotel another Gellias, who, having heard of our arrival, had come to offer us hospitality. He was the architect of the city, Signore Politi, a very agreeable man, whose whole life is devoted to the study of the antiquities in the midst of which he lives. Whatever desire we had to profit by his offer, we refused it, not wishing to hurt our landlord, who had evidently been making great preparations to receive us; but we declared to Signore Politi that in all other respects we would gladly claim his kindness. He answered by putting himself at our entire disposal. We took instant advantage of his speech by asking him for information as to how we could best reach Palermo.

There were two ways, he said, by which to do so: the first to follow the coasts in the speronara; the

second to cut diagonally across Sicily from Girgenti to Palermo. The first necessitated fifteen to eighteen days' sailing; the second three days only on mule-back; moreover it would show us the interior of Sicily in all its solitude and bareness; there was no doubt as to saving of time, or gain of the picturesque. We chose the second. One only unpleasantness was attached to it, so said Signore Politi. The road was infested with robbers, and fifteen days earlier an Englishman had been murdered between Fontana-Fredda and Castro-Novo. We looked at each other, Jadin and I, and laughed.

Ever since we had been in Italy, we had heard incessant talk of bandits without ever perceiving so much as the shadow of one. At first, I own, the terrible tales of travellers stripped, held for ransom, or assassinated, told to us by the drivers of carriages who did not want to drive by night, or by the masters of inns to induce us to take an escort on which they levied a percentage, did produce upon us a certain impression. In consequence, the first few times we prudently stopped where we were; after that we went on with some fear; until finally, seeing that the danger talked of was never realized, we had ended by laughing and travelling at all hours without taking other precautions than that of never going anywhere without our weapons. Later, at Naples, we were positively assured that we could not quit Sicily without meeting that which we had vainly sought elsewhere; but since we had been in Sicily, as at Naples, as at Rome, as in Florence, we had never, so far, met any highway robbers, except the

innkeepers. It is true that they did the thing conscientiously.

The fear expressed by Signore Politi seemed to me therefore exaggerated, and I told him that what he presented as an obstacle was, on the contrary, an attraction the more, and that we chose deliberately the land journey. As this answer, not to seem braggadocio, necessitated explanation, I told him of all the warnings given to us, the luck we had had in meeting with no bad adventures, and the desire we had to make acquaintance with some bandit, if only to give the charm of emotion to our journey.

"Pardieu!" exclaimed Signore Politi, "if that is all you want, I know of the very thing for you."

"What, really?"

"Yes; only, the man is a retired robber; an absolved bandit, as one might say. He is a muleteer in Palermo, and has just arrived here with some English people. If you would like to take him, he has two good mules, and with him you will have one advantage: if you should meet brigands you can negotiate with them. Being an old comrade they will give him advantages they would not give to others."

"Is this honest man in Girgenti?" I cried.

"He was here this morning, and unless he has just started, which I doubt, we can send for him."

"Send at once, I beg of you."

Signore Politi called the waiter and told him to go and find Giacomo Salvatore, tell him that he, Signore Politi, wanted him, and bring him immedi-

ately. Ten minutes later the waiter reappeared followed by the required individual.

He was a man from forty to forty-five years of age, who still preserved beneath the costume of a Sicilian peasant a certain military bearing. He wore upon his head a gray woollen cap, Phrygian in shape and embroidered in red; as for the rest of his accoutrement, it consisted of a blue velvet waistcoat, through the armholes of which came the sleeves of a coarse linen shirt, the cuffs being also embroidered in red like the cap; a woollen sash of several colours that girt his waist; a pair of short breeches of blue velvet like the waistcoat; and a species of top-boots, open at the sides. The whole stood out against the background of a reddish cloak embroidered in green, which, being flung over one shoulder only, hung down behind and gave to his appearance something very picturesque.

Signore Politi had requested us to make no allusion to the former profession of Signore Salvatore, and to content ourselves at this first interview with discussing charges and making our agreement. We promised him to keep within the strictest propriety.

As Politi had supposed, the muleteer, on arriving that morning with two foreigners, had said to himself that he should not lose his time if he waited awhile. It is true that sometimes, as he afterwards owned, he was mistaken in his calculation, and had met with timorous souls who preferred, for their three days' trip through the wilds, other company than that of an ex-robber; then again, under other

circumstances, such for instance as those in which we met him, he was well compensated for his time and trouble. On the whole, he was nearly sure of his customer when the traveller was English or French; the chances were even when the traveller was German; but if he was Italian it was not worth while even to present himself and offer his services; he knew beforehand they would be refused.

The discussion was not long. In the first place, Salvatore, proud as a king, had the habit of imposing conditions, not of accepting them. As these conditions were confined to two piastres for each mule, and two piastres for the muleteer, comprising the mule for the baggage, in all, eight piastres, these arrangements seemed to us so reasonable that we immediately engaged mules and muleteer for the morning of the next day but one; to bind which agreement Salvatore paid us two piastres as earnest-money. Here, by the bye, is a notable fact: throughout Italy it is the *vetturini* who give earnest money to travellers and not the travellers who give it to the *vetturini*.

Signore Politi then asked Salvatore if he thought there was any danger for us on the road. Salvatore replied that as for danger there was none, and he would answer for that. At one place, perhaps, about five or six miles beyond Castro-Novo, we might have some negotiations to make with a band who had chosen to make that neighbourhood their headquarters; but, even in that case, Salvatore would answer for it that the toll demanded of us, supposing it was demanded at all, would not exceed ten or a

dozen piastres. That was, as will be seen, a mere nothing, — not worth the trouble of thinking about.

This point settled, we offered a glass of wine to Salvatore and all of us drank to the prospect of a fortunate trip; after which it became necessary to inform Captain Arena of our resolution and tell him to go round the western end of Sicily with the speronara and rejoin us at Palermo. Consequently, I found a messenger who for half a piastre agreed to take my despatch to the harbour. It contained an invitation to our good captain to come and see us the next morning at nine o'clock, and to bring with him certain designated articles of bare necessity for our trip across the island and for the time we might have to wait in Palermo for the rest of our *roba*.

This done, Signore Politi, seeing that we seemed very anxious to go to bed, took leave of us, offering to be our guide himself on the following day, and begging us to inform the landlord that we should dine with him and not at the inn. Thanks to this discretion, which enabled us to go to bed early, we were early afoot the next morning and ready to follow him when he came to fetch us at six o'clock. The heat, reflected from the bare rocks on which we trod, had been so suffocating the previous day that we had resolved to escape it as much as possible by starting very early in the morning.

We left the city by the same gate through which we had entered it, accompanied by Signore Politi, and followed by our friend Ciotta, whom we would fain have got rid of; but he, like the gardener

in the "Nozze di Figaro," was not such a fool as to dismiss such good masters. While awaiting the opportunity to give us proofs of his erudition, he gave us marks of his good-will by carrying Jadin's stool, umbrella, and colour-box.

The first traces of antiquity that we came to were tombs hollowed in the rock itself, such as I had already seen at Arles and in the village of Baux; I left Jadin to plunge with Signore Politi into a profound scientific discussion, and I walked on with Ciotta to a square little building of rather elegant construction, standing on a sub-base and adorned with four pilasters. After vainly trying with my deepest archæological knowledge to make out the antique purpose of the little edifice, I was forced to have recourse to Ciotta's erudition, and I asked him if he had any opinion as to that ruin.

"Why, certainly, signore," he replied; "that is the Chapel of Phalaris."

"Chapel of Phalaris!" I exclaimed, astonished at that singular conjunction of words. "Do you believe it?"

"I am sure of it, Eccellenza."

"But which Phalaris?" I asked; for after all, there might have been two, and the reputation of the one might have obscured the credit of the other.

"Why!" replied Ciotta, evidently surprised at the question. "I mean the famous tyrant who invented the brass bull."

"Ah! ah! pardon me; I had no idea he was so devout."

"He had remorse, Eccellenza, he had remorse;

and as the place he lived in was only a few steps distant, he built this chapel so as not to have to go far to hear mass.”¹

“Pardon me, *Signore cicerone*, but your explanation seems to me so judicious that I ask leave to write it at once in my note-book.”

“Do so, *Eccellenza*, do so.”

At this moment Jadin joined me. As I did not wish to deprive him of the luminous explanation given me by Ciotta, I left the two together and walked on with *Signore Politi* to visit the Temple of the Giants, while Jadin made in a few strokes a pencil sketch of the Chapel of Phalaris.

The Temple of the Giants is, at the present time, a mass of ruins, and if, according to *Biscari*, a triglyph had not been found among them it would have been difficult to say to what order of architecture the edifice belonged. According to all probability, this temple, that seemed built for eternity [in the fifth century before Christ] was overthrown by the barbarians. In 1401, *Faziello*, the chronicler of Sicily, says that he saw still standing three of the giants who formed the caryatides.² It is

¹ The building does really go by the name of the “Oratorium of Phalaris.” It was originally a Greek Sanctuary ; in 1086, when the town was taken by the Normans under Roger I., Agrigentum was made into a bishopric and the building became a Norman chapel. — TR.

² It is curious that *Dumas* does not give its ancient name, Temple of Zeus, or mention the minute description of it by *Diodorus Siculus*, who tells, from sight, of the vast columns twenty feet in circumference, with flutings so deep that a man could stand in the depths of one. The colossal *Telamones* or *Atlantes* mentioned above stood above them holding up the

these three giants that modern Girgenti, proud daughter of her race, has taken for her arms. Sometime later an earthquake threw them down, and to-day, of all that "court of colossals," as the motto of the city calls them, nought remains but one poor giant, whose broken parts have been brought together as he lies upon the ground; so that he still gives, with a section of the famous columns in the flutings of which a man could hide, a faint idea of the grandeur of the building.

We measured that stone giant: he was twenty-four to twenty-five feet in height, including the arms bent above his head. The outlines of the figure are much defaced, these caryatides, according to all probability, having been covered with stucco, and their hind sides resting against pilasters or walls. Our friend Ciotta had set up on this figure a theory not less ingenious than the one he had propounded to me respecting the Chapel of Phalaris; he thought that this great giant was one of the ancient inhabitants of Sicily, who, having had the imprudence to fall into a petrifying fountain, had been preserved intact until the day when, the fountain having gone dry owing to an earthquake, he was found such as he is to-day.

From the Temple of the Giants we had only the antique way to cross before reaching that of Heracles; which has been even more maltreated than its neighbour. [The stones of both these temples were in

entablature. The metopæ on the east side represented the wars of the gods with the giants, those on the west side the Trojan war. — TR.

modern times carried down the antique way to build the Molo of Girgenti, now called the Porto Empedocle.] One column alone remains standing. This is the temple which Cicero says, apropos of the famous painting of Alcmene by Zeuxis, was so magnificent that it was difficult to see anything finer: *Quo non facile dixerim quidquid videsse pulchrius*. So, when Verres, who found it ready to his hand, attempted to steal that picture and the statue of Heracles by night, the inhabitants of Agrigentum rose in rebellion and drove away with stones the messengers of the Roman proconsul.

These ruins visited we went down through the Porta Aurea, to the plain without the walls, where we presently reached a small square building, which some call the tomb of Theron [descendant of Telemachus, conqueror of Himera, and beautifier of Acragas]; others say it is that of a famous courser. Each side gives such powerful proofs in support of its assertion that our guide, embarrassed between the two, told us, by way of conciliating both, that the tomb was that of an ancient Agrigentine king who had himself buried there with a courser that he loved.

Three hundred steps farther on are two columns encased in the walls of a little casino; they are all that remains of a temple to Æsculapius. The plain in which they stand is still called the Campo Romano. This was the spot where, according to Polybius, a part of the Roman army camped during the first Punic war.

As the sun, with whom we had made so inti-

mate an acquaintance the day before, was beginning again to do us the honours of the town—which Pindar says he did not disdain to sing himself—we deprived ourselves of seeing the temples of Hephaistos, Castor and Pollux, and the Piscine made by the Carthaginian prisoners in the valley of Agragas. Ciotta tried to insist on taking us there, but we promised to pay him as if we had gone; which brought him around instantly to our sentiments.

On reaching the hotel we found Captain Arena waiting for us with our cook. We were surprised by this infraction of the commands of the Neapolitan police, who forbade, it will be remembered, that Cama should set foot on land. But the poor devil had so implored that he should be taken from an element on which he did not have a moment's rest, and which had come so near being fatal to him the evening before, that the captain, touched by his supplications, brought him to us to ask whether, in spite of the injunction against him, we would take it upon us to carry him by land to Palermo. The victim awaited our decision with so piteous a face that we had not the courage to refuse his request. At the risk of what might happen, Cama was, to his great satisfaction, reinstated on terra firma. Five minutes later our landlord rushed in to ask if we were dissatisfied with our dinner of the evening before. As we had no wish to hurt the feelings of the worthy man, who had really done all he could, I told him that far from complaining we were, on the contrary, well satisfied; then he begged me to come and put a

stop to what was going on in his kitchen, where Cama was turning everything topsy-turvy. I ran there at once, and found Cama in the middle of five or six saucepans demanding with loud outcries something to put into them. It was this indiscreet demand that wounded our landlord. I explained to Cama that his requirements were exorbitant, and I requested him to leave the cook of the hotel to cook as he pleased the dozen eggs which with great difficulty he had managed to procure for us. Cama retired grumbling, and I could comfort him only by telling him he should have his turn during our journey from Girgenti to Palermo.

The captain had brought all we had sent for, and on the chance of our wanting them, a hundred or so of piastres. But inasmuch as what Signore Politi had told us of the road did not invite us to overburden ourselves with money, we begged him to carry back the said sum to the speronara, where it would be far safer than in our pockets. We had between us, Jadin and I, about fifty *onces*, that is to say, seven or eight hundred francs, which seemed to us all the more sufficient because the captain promised to rejoin us in about ten days. He had feared for a moment that the accident of losing his anchor might oblige him to remain some days at Girgenti in order to replace it; but Filippo had dived so often and so well that he managed finally to detach its iron tooth from the rock in which it was caught, and at last, having dived seven times to a depth of twenty-five feet, he returned to the surface of the water bringing the anchor. Then Pietro

and Giovanni, who were awaiting him, plunged overboard with a cable ; and that being passed through the ring, the anchor was hoisted in triumph on board the speronara.

All going on for the best, we took leave of our captain, giving him rendezvous at Palermo.

Immediately after breakfast, which, as may be inferred from the forecast given above of it, did not keep us long, we set out in search of whatever remarkable things modern Girgenti might offer. The list was short : a shop of Etruscan vases, very empty, each piece at a price nearly triple what it would cost in Paris ; a small picture, called a Raffaele, at best a Giulio Romano, which had been stolen, then returned by the medium of a confessor, and was now in the keeping of the judge, who was likely to become its ultimate possessor ; and, finally, the cathedral church, deprived for the time being of its bishop, for the reason that, the last prelate having died, the King of Naples became possessed, provisionally, of his revenues ; and as these amounted to some thirty thousand *onces* (about 4,800,000 francs) his Majesty of the Two Sicilies was in no haste to fill the vacant benefice.

These different visits, insignificant though they were, brought us, nevertheless, to the dinner hour, and to a meal which was served to us with a profusion we had found with our good Gemellaro at Nicotoli, and never since. At dessert, the conversation again fell upon robbers ; and this topic reminding us naturally of our future guide Salvatore, I asked Signore Politi to give us some information as to how

the grace of God had touched him. Instead of replying to my inquiry our host proposed to tell us of an incident which had happened some seven or eight years earlier at Castrogiovanni. Not wishing to lose reality for a shadow we accepted at once, and without further preamble than to call for coffee and give orders that we were not to be disturbed under any pretext whatsoever, Signore Politi told us the following tale.

X

COLONEL SANTA-CROCE

ON the 20th of July, 1826, at six o'clock in the evening, not only was the court-room of Castrogiovanni crowded with inquisitive persons, but the neighbouring streets were blocked by a flood of men and women who, unable to get a place in the justice hall, were waiting outside to hear the verdict. This verdict was of the utmost importance to the whole population of central Sicily. The accused man, who was now before the judges, made part, it was asserted, of the band of the famous captain Luigi Lana, which appearing sometimes on the road from Catania to Palermo, sometimes on that from Catania to Girgenti, and occasionally on both at the same time, scrupulously robbed and stripped every traveller who had the imprudence to take either of those routes.

Signore Luigi Lana was one of those bandit chiefs that are found no longer except in Sicily and at the Opéra-Comique, — robbers who rush to the high-roads to redress the abuses of society, and restore some equality between the favours and disfavours of fortune. A score of persons had had personal dealings with him; but out of the twenty descriptions of him given by those persons there were not two alike. One said he was a fine, handsome young man of four or five and twenty, with fair hair and the look of a

woman ; others declared he was a man of forty to forty-five, with strongly marked features, olive skin, and black and close-curling hair. Some said they had seen him enter churches and say his prayers with a compunction that put the most fervent monks to shame ; others had heard him utter blasphemies fit to rend the heavens, and held him to be a wicked and lost reprobate. There were also some, but these, it must be owned, were few in number, who said he was a more honest man than those who sought to catch him and hang him, and a more rigid observer of a simple verbal promise than many commercial persons are of written obligations ; those who thought thus produced a fact which effectually proved that Signore Luigi Lana never jested in matters concerning his promised word. Here is the fact on which they based the good opinion they had formed and proclaimed touching this singular personage.

One day when he was being pursued, he found a refuge in the house of a rich Sicilian noble named the Marchese di Villalba. On leaving him Luigi, being grateful, promised the marquis that he and his should henceforth travel in Sicily in perfect safety. Confiding in this promise, the marquis soon after sent his man of business to make a payment at Cefalù ; but between Polizzi and Collesano the steward was stopped by a robber. In vain the poor devil said that he belonged to the Marchese di Villalba and that the said Marchese had a safe-conduct from the captain for himself and all his people. The bandit listened to none of these assertions and left the poor steward as naked as a worm.. Seeing the impossibil-

ity of going farther, the steward returned on his steps and asked shelter in the first house he came to in Polizzi; thence he wrote to his master of the misfortune which had befallen him and asked his instructions. The marquis, who did not care to go and summon Lana to keep the promise he had made him and then had broken so immediately, was in the act of writing to his poor steward to return to the château, when he received two sacks brought by an unknown man, who left them, saying they were sent to the marquis by Captain Luigi Lana. The marquis opened them. The first contained the money taken from the steward, the second, the head of the robber. At the same time the steward received at the house where he had taken refuge, by another unknown messenger, the clothes of which he had been stripped. From that day forth no bandit ever ventured to rub against the Marchese di Villalba, or any of his household.

Well, as I have said, on the 20th of July, 1826, a man was being tried in the court-room of Castrogiovanni on suspicion of belonging to the band of Luigi Lana, and of having murdered an English traveller two months earlier, that is to say, on the 18th of May, between Centorbi and Paterno. As the Englishman died two days after the four stab-wounds he had received, there was no opportunity of confronting him with the supposed guilty party. But before expiring, the victim, who had maintained throughout a coolness and self-possession worthy of the land in which he was born, gave so precise a description of his murderer that six weeks after the

Englishman's death they were able to capture the guilty man.

When I say the guilty man, I ought to say simply the accused man, for opinions were much divided as to the guilt of the individual who was now before Signore Bartolommeo, the judge of Castrogiovanni. In fact, in spite of the testimony of the dying Englishman, and in spite of the identity of his description with the features of the accused man, the latter maintained that he was the victim of a resemblance, and that on the very day of the murder he was in the harbour of Palermo, where, at the time, he was working as a porter. Unfortunately, Signore Bartolommeo, the judge, seemed to have sided with the number of persons who were little inclined to believe this denial, a fact which left, as can readily be seen, very little hope for the poor devil, whose only plea was an alibi he could not prove.

The matter stood thus, and the populace were waiting, expecting every moment to hear the verdict, when a handsome young man of twenty-eight to thirty years of age, in the uniform of an English colonel, followed by two servants, like himself on horseback, rode into Castrogiovanni, coming from the direction of Palermo, and stopped at the Albergo dei Ciclopi, kept by the worthy Gaetano Pacca. As travellers of that quality were rare in Castrogiovanni, Gaetano Pacca hastened himself to the door, and yielded to no one the honour of holding the stranger's bridle while the rider dismounted. The officer, who, as I have said, was followed by two servants, seemed at first opposed to this excess of politeness,

then, observing that the landlord insisted, and not wishing to refuse such a trifle, he dismounted with much grace and entered the inn, flicking off as he did so, with his riding whip, the dust on his boots and trousers.

"I am the very humble servant of your Excellency," said the landlord, who, having flung the bridle of the horse to his hostler, entered the inn behind the stranger, "and I shall be eternally proud that a gentleman of the rank of your Excellency has stopped at the Albergo dei Ciclopi. Your Excellency has no doubt taken a long ride, and a long ride rouses the appetite. What shall I serve your Excellency for dinner?"

"My dear Signore Pacca," said the stranger, speaking Italian with a strong Maltese accent, and with a haughty air, which cut short the rather familiar politeness of the landlord, "have the goodness, in the first place, to reply to a question I wish to ask you; after which we will return to the proposal you are kind enough to make to me."

"I am at the orders of your Excellency."

"Very good. I wish to know how many miles it is from Castrogiovanni to the château of my friend the Prince of Paterno."

"Your Excellency surely does not mean to take such a long ride to-day, and especially not at this hour?"

"Excuse me, my dear Pacca," said the stranger, in the same rather scoffing tone noticeable already in his manner and words, "but do you not perceive that you are answering my question with another

question? I asked you how many miles it is from here to the château of the Prince of Paterno; do you understand me?"

"Seventeen miles, your Excellency."

"Very good; with my horse that is an affair of less than three hours; if I leave at eight o'clock I shall be there before midnight. So prepare my dinner, and that of my servants, and feed our horses."

"Lord God!" exclaimed the innkeeper, "your Excellency surely does not mean to travel by night?"

"Why not?"

"Your Excellency must know that the roads are not safe."

The stranger laughed with a look of inexpressible contempt; then, after a moment's silence, "What is there to fear?" he asked, continuing to flick the dust from his trousers with his whip.

"What is there to fear! Your Excellency asks that?"

"Yes, I do ask it."

"Has your Excellency never heard tell of Luigi Lana?"

"Luigi Lana? who is he?"

"He is the most terrible bandit, your Excellency, who ever appeared in Sicily."

"Really?" said the stranger, in his bantering tone.

"And especially at this moment when he is much exasperated," added the landlord. "I'll answer for it, he would n't give quarter to any one."

"Why is he exasperated, my good Pacca? Come, tell me about it."

"Because they are trying at this moment one of his band."

"Where?"

"Here, in the court-room, your Excellency."

"Of course the rascal will be condemned?"

"I am afraid so, Excellency."

"Why are you afraid of it, Signore Gaetano?"

"Why? because, your Excellency, Luigi Lana is a man who would set fire to all four corners of Castrogiovanni to avenge himself."

The stranger burst out laughing.

"May I know why your Excellency laughs?" asked the innkeeper, amazed.

"I laugh because one man of spirit can make eight or ten thousand cowards like you tremble," replied the stranger, with a more contemptuous air than ever. "So," he continued, after a moment's pause, "you think this man will certainly be condemned?"

"I have n't a doubt of it, Excellency."

"I am sorry I did not get here earlier," said the stranger, as if to himself; "I should like to have seen the figure the fellow cut on being condemned."

"Perhaps there is still time," said Pacca; "and if your Excellency would like to amuse yourself that way while dinner is getting ready, I will write a line to the Judge Bartolommeo, whose foster-brother I have the honour to be; and I do not doubt that on my introduction he will place your Excellency on the bench of lawyers."

"Thank you, my friend," said the stranger, rising and going to the door; "thank you, but it is prob-

ably too late ; I hear a great noise of people in the streets ; the verdict has no doubt been given."

The crowd, which ten minutes earlier was pressing round the court-room, was now dispersing through the streets with shouts of "Death ! death !" issuing from four or five thousand throats. The prisoner, in spite of his reiterated denials, having no witnesses on his behalf, was declared guilty and sentenced to be hung.

The young colonel stood in the doorway till the throng, which he gazed at frowning and gnawing his moustache, had passed by ; then, when the street had again become almost solitary, save for two or three lingering groups here and there, he turned to the innkeeper, who stood respectfully behind him, standing on tiptoe in the effort to look over his shoulder.

"When do you think that man will be executed, friend Pacca ?" asked the stranger.

"Day after to-morrow morning, no doubt," replied Pacca ; "to-day sentence, to-night confession, to-morrow *chapelle ardente*, next day gibbet."

"At what hour ?"

"Eight o'clock ; that's the usual time."

"Upon my word, I have a fancy !" exclaimed the colonel.

"And what may that be, Excellency ?"

"Why, as I missed seeing the fellow condemned, I should like to see him hanged."

"Nothing easier ; your Excellency can start to-morrow morning, pay your visit to the Prince of Paterno, and be back here to-morrow evening."

“You speak like Saint John of the Golden Mouth, my dear Pacca,” replied the colonel, pulling out his cambric shirt-frill from his British uniform; “I will do as you say. Therefore get ready my dinner and my room; try to have them, I’ll not say good, but passable. I shall leave in the morning and return at night. During that time get me a good place to see the execution, — a window for instance; I will pay whatever is asked.”

“I can do better than that, Excellency.”

“How so?”

“Your Excellency knows that it is customary for the judge to be present at executions, on a platform.”

“Ah! the custom, is it? No, I did not know it — no matter, go on.”

“I will ask the judge, whose friend I have the honour to be, to keep a place beside him for your Excellency.”

“Capital! And in return I promise you, if you obtain that place for me, to pay your bill without verifying the items. Now, while waiting for dinner, which, I am afraid, will be long in coming, have you nothing you can give me to read to pass the time?”

“Yes, your Excellency, oh, yes!” replied Pacca, opening a cupboard where a few shabby and torn books were mouldering. “Here is the ‘Guide to Travellers in Sicily,’ by that illustrious learned man, Francesco Ferrara; here are two volumes of ‘Gay and Lively Poems,’ by the Abbé Meli; here’s a treatise on the Jettatura by Signore Nicola Valletta; here’s the ‘History of the Terrible Bandit,

Luigi Lana,' adorned with his portrait painted from life — ”

“ Ah! the devil! my dear landlord, give me that; I am curious to know what the man you threaten me with looks like.”

“ There he is, Excellency, look at him.”

“ The deuce! Well, he is a villanous-looking fellow, your friend Luigi Lana, with his big moustache, his eyes sticking out of his head, his unkempt hair under that sugar-loaf hat, and the pistols in his belt.”

“ But this picture of him, terrible as it is, is nothing to the original; I can assure your Excellency of that.”

“ Have you ever seen him, my good Pacca? ” asked the young colonel, who sat tilting his chair and looking at the innkeeper in his sarcastic way.

“ No, Excellency; no, I have not seen him; but I have lodged poor devils of travellers who have met him to their sorrow, and they have described him to me from head to foot.”

“ Pooh! fear troubled their sight; they must have been exaggerating. However, my dear landlord, as I have what I want, go and attend to my dinner, while I see if the deeds of this terrible personage correspond with his face.”

“ Immediately, your Excellency, immediately.”

The traveller made a sign with his head, indicating that he knew perfectly well what to expect of an Italian's *subito*, and stretching himself out on two chairs, he proceeded with truly Southern indifference to begin his reading.

Doubtless, in spite of the contempt with which he

opened the book, the colonel found something in it to interest him, for when the landlord returned in half an hour he found him in the same attitude and occupied in the same way. If the colonel had employed his time well, so had the landlord. After talking with the master he had talked with the servants, and learned from them that the traveller whom he had the honour of lodging was a young Maltese, who, having a fortune of one hundred thousand francs a year, had purchased a colonelcy in a British regiment. The next thing was to know the colonel's name. As for this, the proprietor of the *Albergo dei Ciclopi* had a simple method of ascertaining it. He took his register, according to Italian custom, for the traveller to sign.

The colonel raised his eyes, perceived the landlord, and seeing the register, guessed his object. Stretching out his hand he took the pen and wrote at the place indicated by Gaetano's forefinger: "Colonel Santa-Croce."

Gaetano, amply satisfied, now knew all he wanted to know.

"If your Excellency would be pleased to sit down to table," he said; "the soup is served."

"Ah!" said the young colonel, "why did not you tell me sooner? I would have spared you the trouble of removing your table service."

"Removing my table service, your Excellency! Is it not arranged to your taste?"

"Oh, yes, my dear host; oh, yes; but I have a habit of wiping my fingers with Holland damask, and eating off silver plate; it is not that your nap-

kins are not clean, and your pewter forks quite bright, but with your permission I will not use them. Call my servant."

The landlord obeyed instantly, albeit rather humiliated at the affront put upon him by the colonel; but as the latter had promised not to verify his bill he determined to wipe out the insult by its items.

Five minutes later the colonel's valet entered with a case as large as a trunk, out of which he took silver plates and dishes, knives and forks, and a silver-gilt goblet, all marked with the colonel's arms. His master then sat down to dinner with the disdainful air of a prince, scarcely tasted each dish, and at the close of the meal, seeing that the weather was fine and the moonlight superb, he started to take a turn through the town. Pacca offered to accompany him, but the colonel replied that he preferred to be alone.

Nevertheless, as the landlord was by nature very inquisitive, he left his inn ten minutes after his guest, on pretence of taking a walk himself, but really in the hope of meeting him. Now, although Castrogiovanni has but two or three principal streets, the expectation of the worthy innkeeper was balked; he saw nothing that even resembled the haughty form and bearing of the young colonel. As he passed before the prison, he saw a poor Franciscan monk entering it, — a man of God, on his way to prepare the criminal for death.

The colonel did not return to the inn till midnight. Gaetano Pacca longed to ask him what he could find of interest in Castrogiovanni to keep him out so late; but as he opened his mouth to ask that

question, the young man let fall upon him so disdainful a glance, with an order to have him waked at six in the morning, that the worthy Gaetano felt the words die in his mouth, and he bowed in sign of obedience without proffering a single word.

At seven in the morning the colonel, after swallowing a cup of black coffee only, rode off, as he had said, for the castle of the Prince of Paterno, taking with him one valet, and leaving the other to look after his baggage and remind Gaetano Pacca of his promise to obtain from the judge a place beside him from which to witness the execution.

An execution was not a common thing at Castrogiovanni ; consequently, the day that preceded that of the poor condemned man was one of agitation ; everybody roamed the streets ; the bells were tolled ; those who had news from the judge or the jailer were in demand. It was thought that the criminal, having no longer any hope of lessening the severity of his punishment except by confession, would make revelations, so that the people might know something positive about the man and about his captain, the terrible Luigi Lana. This hope was foiled ; not only did the criminal make no revelation, but, on the contrary, he continued to protest his innocence, repeating incessantly that on the day of the murder he was in Palermo, nearly one hundred and fifty miles from the scene of the crime. The confessor himself could draw nothing else from him, and the venerable monk left the prison saying he feared that human justice, intending to punish a guilty man, was really making a martyr.

The day went by in vehement discussions as to the guilt or innocence of the condemned man ; at dark the windows of the mortuary chapel, where he was to pass the night, were seen lighted up. At ten o'clock that evening the Franciscan monk who had ministered to him in his cell the day before, was taken to the chapel and remained with the prisoner an hour and a half. After his departure, the condemned man, who had been much agitated during the day, appeared more tranquil.

At midnight the colonel returned with his valet to the Albergo dei Ciclopi, and finding the landlord sitting up to receive him, he told him, first, to take good care of his horses, who had made a long trip ; then he inquired if his order about obtaining a seat had been executed. Gaetano replied that his friend the judge had been only too happy to do something agreeable to his Excellency, and that on the morrow he would give him the seat beside him on the platform that he desired.

Throughout that night the bells were tolled to remind good souls to pray for the man about to die.

At five in the morning the streets leading from the prison to the place of execution were thronged with people, the windows were a wall of heads, and even the roofs cracked with the weight of spectators. At seven o'clock the judge took his seat on the platform with two clerks, the commandant of the guard, and the commissary of police, and, as he had promised Gaetano, a seat was reserved beside him for the colonel. At half-past seven the latter arrived ; he thanked the judge very graciously, with the air of

a great seigneur, for his kind attention, and, having looked at a magnificent watch set round with diamonds to see if he should have to wait long, he sat down in the place of honour among the public authorities of Castrogiovanni.

At eight o'clock the bells began to ring with redoubled unction; this was the signal that the condemned man was leaving the prison. A few minutes later sounds of his approach were heard. The executioner, who preceded him, appeared on horseback; then four guards, marching behind that official; then the condemned man himself, mounted on an ass with his face to the tail of the animal, thus proceeding backward that he might keep in sight the coffin which was borne by the Brothers of the Misericordia; after them the whole population of Castrogiovanni brought up the rear.

The condemned man seemed to listen in a very absent manner to the exhortations of the monk who accompanied him. It was said in the crowd that this was because the monk was not the same as the one who had ministered to him in prison; the latter had not come at the time expected, and they were forced to send in haste for another that the condemned man might not die without the succour of religion. However that may have been, the poor devil, as we have said, seemed very uneasy and kept casting right and left among the crowd glances that plainly showed the anxiety of his mind. From time to time, unlike the usual way of criminals, who spare themselves the sight as long as possible, he turned to look at the gibbet, calculating, perhaps, how long

he still had to live. Suddenly, on arriving before the judge's platform and just as the confessor was helping him to dismount from his ass, he gave a loud cry, and motioning with his head, for his hands were bound, at the colonel seated beside the judge, —

“Father!” he exclaimed, addressing the monk, “father, there is a signore who can save me if he will.”

“Which one?” asked the monk, in astonishment.

“That one next to the judge, father, — the one with the red uniform and the colonel's epaulets. It is the good God himself who has brought him in my way, father. Miracle! miracle!”

“Miracle! miracle!” echoed the crowd, without as yet knowing what it meant. This, however, did not prevent the executioner from approaching the prisoner in order to begin his duties. But the confessor placed himself between them.

“Stop!” he said, “in the name of God, stop! — Judge,” he continued, “the prisoner says that he recognizes, sitting beside you, a witness who can save his life by proving that he is innocent. Judge, I adjure you to hear this witness.”

“Who is he?” asked the judge rising from his seat.

“Colonel Santa-Croce! Colonel Santa-Croce!” cried the prisoner.

“I?” said the colonel in astonishment, rising also. “I, my friend? You are certainly mistaken; for though you know my name, I do not know you.”

“You do not know him, hey?” asked the judge.

"Not in the least," replied the colonel, after looking with great attention at the prisoner.

"I thought so," said the judge, shaking his head; "it is one of the usual tricks of these wretches."

Then he sat down, and made a sign to the executioner to continue his duties.

"Colonel!" cried the prisoner, "colonel, don't leave me to die thus when a word from you could save me. Colonel, let me ask you a question."

"Yes, yes," cried the crowd, "that's only fair; let the man speak, let him speak!"

"Judge," said the colonel, "I think that humanity requires us to grant the request of this unfortunate man. If he tries to deceive us, we shall soon perceive it, and his death will only be delayed a few moments."

"I can refuse nothing to your Excellency," replied the judge; "but really, it is scarcely worth while, believe me, colonel, to give him that satisfaction."

"I ask it for my own conscience' sake," said the colonel.

"I have already told your Excellency, that I am at your orders," replied the judge, rising; then he added, "Guards, bring the prisoner here."

They brought the unfortunate man. He was pale as death, and trembling in all his limbs.

"Well, you rascal," said the judge, "here you are in presence of his Excellency; speak out."

"Excellency," said the condemned man, "don't you remember that on the 18th of last May you landed at Palermo, coming from Naples?"

"I cannot fix the day as precisely as you do, my

friend; but it is true that about that time I landed in Sicily."

"But don't you remember, Excellency, the porter who carried your trunks on a little hand-cart from the quay to the Hôtel des Quatres Saisons, where you put up?"

"I did certainly put up at the Hôtel des Quatres Saisons," replied the colonel; "but I must own I have entirely forgotten the face of the man who conducted me there."

"But what you can't have forgotten, Excellency, is that in passing the door of a locksmith one of the workmen came out carrying an iron bar on his shoulder which struck me a blow on the head, and made this wound — See!"

And thrusting forward his head he showed a wound, scarcely closed as yet, at the side of his forehead.

"Yes, you are right, perfectly right," said the colonel. "I remember that circumstance as if it happened yesterday."

"And in proof of it," cried the prisoner, joyfully, for seeing he was recognized he began to hope, "the proof is that, generous signore that you are, instead of the six carlinos I asked you, you gave me two ounces."

"All that is the exact truth," said the colonel, turning to the judge; "but we can get better information still. I carry with me a diary in which I write down from day to day what I do. It will be easy, therefore, to make sure that this man is not giving us a false date."

“Look for it, look for it, colonel!” cried the prisoner; “now I am sure of my safety!”

The colonel took out and opened his diary; looking it over until he came to the date mentioned, he read the entry aloud, as follows:

“‘May 18th. To-day I landed in Palermo at eleven o’clock in the morning. Took on the quay a poor devil who got wounded in carting my trunks. Lodged at the Hôtel des Quatres Saisons.’”

“There! you see!” cried the prisoner.

“I’ faith, judge,” said the colonel, turning towards the Signore Bartolommeo, “if the murder was really committed on the 18th of May, I can on my honour affirm that this poor man who is accused of it was at Palermo on that day, where he was wounded, as my note-book says, in my service. Now, as he could not possibly be in Palermo and at Centorbi on the same day, he is necessarily innocent.”

“Innocent! innocent!” cried the crowd.

“Yes, innocent, my friends, innocent!” cried the prisoner. “I felt sure that God would work a miracle in my favour.”

“Miracle! miracle!” cried the crowd.

“Well, then,” said the judge, “we will send him back to prison and proceed to another inquiry.”

“No! no! free! free this instant!” shouted the people.

At these words part of the crowd rushed upon the platform, carried off the prisoner, and unbound his hands, while another part knocked down the gibbet and pursued the hangman, pelting him with stones.

As for the colonel, he was carried back in triumph to the Albergo dei Ciclopi.

All that day there was festival at Castrogiovanni ; and when the colonel quitted the town at midday he and his horse forced a passage with difficulty through the floods of people, who kissed his hands, crying out : “ Long live Colonel Santa-Croce ! the saviour of the innocent ! ”

As for the lately condemned man, as everybody wanted to speak to him and hear from his own lips the tale of his adventure, it was nearly dark before he got any freedom at all. But he profited instantly by the little he got then to slip up a dark and narrow alley, and so to the gate of the town ; once outside of the gate he ran with all his might to a gorge in the mountains and disappeared.

The next morning the judge received a letter from Luigi Lana in which the bandit chief thanked him for his kindness in giving him a seat beside him on his platform ; also he begged him to present his compliments to his friend Gaetano Pacca, the landlord of the Albergo dei Ciclopi.

But, free as the condemned man now was, the impression produced upon his mind by the sight of the gibbet, which he had, so to speak, laid a finger on, had been so real and so profound that he resolved, in spite of the dissuasions of his comrades, to abandon the life he had led so far, and be reconciled with the police. The monk who had accompanied him from the prison to the scaffold was the intermediary between him and the authorities. His petition was transmitted to the viceroy, and as the bandit merely

asked that his life be spared, promising in future to be a model of honesty, his request, after certain negotiations between the monk and the viceroy, was granted, on one condition, namely: that he should make honourable amends, bare-footed, with a rope round his waist. This ceremony took place in Palermo, to the great edification of all faithful souls.

That is what happened at Castrogiovanni on the 20th of July, in the year of our Lord one thousand, eight hundred and twenty-six.

“And since then,” I asked of Signore Politi, as soon as he had finished his tale, “what has become, please to tell me, of that newly honest man?”

“He took the name of Salvatore, doubtless in memory of the miraculous manner in which he was saved; he became a muleteer, in order to keep his pledge of earning his living in an honourable manner, and if what I have now told you does not give you too great a distrust of him, he will have the honour to be your guide to-morrow from Girgenti to Palermo.”

XI

THE INTERIOR OF SICILY

THE next day, in spite of all diligence, we did not succeed in getting off until nine in the morning. I had ordered an extra mule for Cama, but when he saw himself for the first time in his life perched on a saddle with no other support than two stirrups of unequal length, he declared that the bridle seemed to him too insufficient a hold to dare to trust to it the preservation of his person. Consequently, with Salvatore's help, he descended to earth and the mule was sent away.

During this time all our belongings were loaded on the baggage mule. As this baggage was considerable, Cama noticed that it provided a flat surface on the back of the animal of three or four feet in diameter. This terrace seemed to Cama a veritable heaven of safety, compared to the saddle, and he asked to be allowed to establish himself according to his fancy on the little platform. Salvatore, on being consulted as to whether his mule could carry this additional weight, saw no objection; so that in a minute more Cama found himself perched in the midst of our baggage, seated after the manner of tailors and rising pyramidically from the centre of his domain.

We had been advised to visit the Maccalubas. We therefore asked Salvatore to take the road that led to them ; but he, accustomed to such requests, had taken it of his own accord, and we were already a mile and a half on our way there when we asked him to take it.

The Maccalubas are neither more nor less than little mud volcanoes, in number about thirty or forty, that rise from a boggy plain. Each of these miniature volcanoes is a foot to a foot and a half high ; the matter that issues from these mole-hills is a sort of pasty mud, rust colour, very cold, and, I am told, very salt. When we were there these volcanoes were at rest ; that is to say, with great difficulty, and with efforts that seemed to exhaust them, they vomited their damp lava from their craters. Salvatore assured us there were times when the mud rose one hundred to one hundred and fifty feet high, and the whole of the boggy plain heaved like the surface of the sea. We saw nothing of that kind. On the contrary, the plain was very quiet, and dry enough to enable us not to sink-in more than two or three inches when walking between the volcanoes. As the place, in spite of advice, seemed to us of moderate interest to any but those who were strong enough in geology (which we were not) to study the causes of this phenomenon, we made but a short stay and continued our journey.

Towards eleven o'clock we came to the banks of a small river. As the path we were on was intended only for litters, mules, and foot-passengers, there was no other way of crossing the stream than by ford-

ing it. I invited Salvatore to mount behind me; but as it was very warm he preferred to cross tranquilly, like his mule; that is to say, through water that was up to his waist.

A few steps beyond the river we came to a species of little thicket of oleanders surrounding a fountain. The place seemed made for a halt for breakfast, so we jumped off our animals. Cama allowed himself to slide from the top of his baggage; Salvatore beat the bushes to drive away two or three adders and a dozen lizards, and we ate our breakfast. As we had invited Salvatore to breakfast with us, an honour that after certain preliminary affectations he ended by accepting, he became towards the end of the meal rather more communicative than he had been at starting. Jadin profited by this beginning of sociability to ask permission to make his portrait. Salvatore consented, laughing, draped his cloak over his left shoulder, leaned on the pointed stick which he used to jump over brooks and to prick his mules, crossed one leg over the other, and stood before Jadin with the immobility and self-possession of a man accustomed to accede to such demands.

During this time I took my gun and beat up the neighbourhood; an unfortunate rabbit that was out of its hole and attempted to regain it instead of staying quietly in its form, where I should never have noticed it, was the sole trophy of my expedition.

This was an occasion for Salvatore to ask permission to examine our guns, which he had not yet dared to do, notwithstanding his evident desire. He took them and turned them about like a man to whom

weapons are familiar ; but as these were guns of the Lefauchaux pattern, the mechanism was perfectly unknown to him. I was not sorry to show him, while seeming to satisfy his curiosity, that at any reasonable distance I should not miss my man ; so I changed my cartridges, flung two piastres into the air, and touched both. Salvatore went and picked up the coins, saw the mark of the lead upon them, and nodded his head in worthy appreciation of the shot I had made. I proposed to him to do the same thing ; he answered quite simply that he had never been a good shot on the fly, but if my companion would lend him his carbine he would show us what he could do at a mark. As the carbine was loaded with ball, Jadin put it at once into his hands. Salvatore took for a mark a little white stone the size of an egg, which lay about a hundred steps away from us in the middle of the path, and after aiming with an attention that showed the importance he attached to success, he fired his shot and broke the stone to atoms.

This caused Jadin and me to make the moderately reassuring reflection that, on occasion, Salvatore also would not miss his man.

As for Cama, he thought of nothing else than of wrapping his rabbit in leaves that he gathered by the fountain, in order to keep it fresh until the dinner hour.

We resumed our way. The miserable little *fiumicello* that we had just crossed made more twists and turns than the famous Meander. We met it a dozen times in less than nine miles, and each time we

forded it as before. During this whole day we saw no cultivated land, only immense plains covered with tall herbage burnt by the sun, in the midst of which rose, now and then, like a verdant isle, a little cabin surrounded by cactus, pomegranates, and oleanders. For two or three hundred feet around the cabin the soil would be cleared, and we saw a few vegetables raising their heads out of the ground; and these, in all probability, were the sole food of the unfortunate people living in those solitudes.

We advanced until five in the afternoon, seeing from time to time a species of village perched on some rocky eminence, the path by which it could be reached being quite indistinguishable. At last, from the top of a little hill Salvatore pointed out to us a farmhouse directly on our way, and told us that it was there we must pass the night. A league or so beyond this farmhouse and to right of the path, on the slope of a mountain, was a town of some importance called Castro-Novo. We asked Salvatore why we could not go on to that town instead of stopping at some miserable wayside inn where we should find nothing to eat. Salvatore merely replied that it would take us too far out of our way. As longer insistence might make our guide think we distrusted him, which would have been very ridiculous after our voluntary choice of his services, we said no more; resolving, inasmuch as we had taken him, to leave matters wholly to him, merely asking — that we might at least know where we were going to pass the night — the name of that hovel. He answered that it was called Fontana-Fredda.

It was really the most magnificently cut-throat place I ever saw in my life, isolated in a little gorge, without an inclosing wall, or a single door or window that could be shut. As for those who inhabited it, our presence apparently did not seem to them an event worthy of curiosity, for we stopped at the door, got off our mules, and entered the first room without seeing a soul. It was only on opening a side door that I saw a woman rocking a child on her knees and singing a slow, monotonous ditty. I spoke to her; she answered, without moving, in so strange a patois that I renounced all attempt at conversing with her and returned to Salvatore, who, in default of a stable-boy, was unloading his mules himself. I asked him to attend in person to our dinner and our lodging. He answered, shaking his head, that we must not count much on either one or the other, but he would do his best.

Returning to the first room I found Cama in despair. He had made a search and found neither saucepan, nor gridiron, nor spit. I invited him to first get something to boil, roast, or broil, and we would talk about the utensils later.

After tying his mules to the manger Salvatore made his appearance and went to the inner room, but returned an instant later to say that the master of the house having gone to Secocca, and his wife being half idiotic, we should have to do for ourselves as if the house were deserted. Provisions were limited, he informed us, to a flask of rancid oil and a few chestnuts; as for bread, there was none.

If this language was not reassuring, at any rate it

was perfectly clear. Each of us began an independent search, collecting what he could. Jadin, after half-an-hour's hunt among the rocks returned with a species of dove; Salvatore had twisted the neck of an old hen; I had found in a shed at the back of the house, three eggs; and Cama had ransacked the garden and brought in two pomegranates and a dozen prickly-pears. All this, joined to the rabbit, fortunately put to death while Jadin was taking Salvatore's likeness, presented, more or less, the appearance of a dinner. The thing was now how to cook it. Finding no saucepan, and being driven to use the rancid oil in place of butter, we determined that our *menu* should consist of chicken soup, roast game, and three boiled eggs for *entrée*, and, for dessert, pomegranates flanked by prickly-pears; the chestnuts roasted in the ashes took the place of bread.

All this discomfort would have been nothing, absolutely nothing at all, if it had not been for the odious filth of the hovel in which we were. Hardly had we set to work before two children in rags, gaunt, pallid, and fevered, issued like gnomes from heaven knows where, and came and crouched on each side of the fireplace, following the transformation of our few provisions with hungry eyes. We tried at first to drive them away, merely to relieve ourselves of this disgusting sight, but the harangue I made them and the kick with which, to my great regret, Cama accompanied my words, produced nothing but low growls like those of a young wild boar when you try to force him out of his den. I then turned to Salvatore, asking what was the matter with them and what

they wanted, and Salvatore answered me, casting a glance of unspeakable pity upon them: "What do they want?—they are hungry and want something to eat."

Alas! that is the cry of the people of Sicily; I heard nothing else during the three months I lived there. There are hapless beings on that island whose hunger will never have been appeased from the day when they began to suck the half-dried breast of their mother to the day when, lying on their bed of death, they expire trying to swallow the sacred wafer which the priest lays upon their lips.

From that moment those poor children had rights to the greater part of our dinner; our hunger may have remained, but theirs at least was satisfied. How horrible it is to think that there are miserable beings to whom one good meal is the memory of a lifetime!

Dinner over, we began to think of our lodging. Salvatore discovered for us a species of chamber on the ground-floor, on the earth of which were two troughs in which were straw mattresses without any sheets; these were our beds. Such as they were, joined to the vermin that already covered the legs of our trousers and crawled with impunity along the walls, they did not promise much sleep; therefore we determined to postpone attempting it as late as possible, and went out, guns on our shoulders, for a tramp about the country.

Nothing was ever sweeter, calmer, more tranquil than this solitude; 't was the silence and the poesy of the desert. The burning air of the day had given place to a little breeze that brought with it a briny

savour full of voluptuous freshness; the sky was a vast dais of sapphire starred with gold; huge meteors were noiselessly crossing space, sometimes like an arrow flying to its aim, at other times like globes of fire descending from the heavens upon the earth. Now and again a belated grasshopper began a chirp, suddenly arrested and then renewed; the fire-flies, live stars, sparkled, like those ephemeral flashes that children like to stir among the half-extinguished embers on a hearth.

It would have been sweet indeed to spend the night in this way, but on the morrow we had forty miles to do, and to-day we had done twenty-five, so that here, as everywhere, as always, when the soul said yes, the body said no. We returned at ten o'clock, and threw ourselves, dressed as we were, upon our beds. At first fatigue carried all before it and I fell asleep; but in an hour's time I woke up pricked by ten thousand pins; after that I might as well have tried to sleep in a bee-hive. I moved, I changed my position, I turned and re-turned — impossible to go to sleep again.

As for Jadin, whether his fatigue was greater or his skin less sensitive than mine, he slept like Epimenides.

I then remembered the shed full of straw where I discovered the eggs, and it seemed to me a region of bliss compared with the hell in which I was. Consequently, as nothing prevented me from doing what I pleased, I took my gun which lay beside my mattress, opened the window gently, jumped down, and went to stretch myself out on that much desired straw.

I had been there perhaps half an hour and was beginning to enter the state between waking and sleeping when I fancied I heard talking not far off. For a few moments I doubted, and was trying to fall more deeply asleep, when the sound became so distinct that I opened my eyes completely and saw by the starlight three men standing together at the corner of the house. My first thought was to make sure that my gun was beside me. I felt it at the spot where I had laid it, and then, more tranquil, I fixed my eyes upon the three individuals.

As I was hidden by the shadow thrown by the roof of the shed they could not see me; while I, on the contrary, could, as my eyes grew accustomed to the darkness, distinguish them perfectly. They were wrapped in long cloaks; one of them had a gun; the others were armed only with sticks.

After some minutes, during which time they remained motionless, speaking in low voices, the one who had the gun went to the window through which I had lately come out, opened the shutter, and put his head through cautiously, but far enough to look into the room. As we had left a lighted lamp on the chimney-piece he could see that one of our mattresses was occupied, the other empty. No doubt this circumstance disturbed him, for he returned at once to his companions and spoke to them excitedly. All three then approached the window. I thought the moment had come; I rose on one knee and cocked both triggers of my gun. As the intentions of three rascals who enter a window at midnight cannot be doubtful, my resolution was taken;

at the first act of breaking-in which they attempted I should fire two shots, and if the third man did not run away, Jadin, awakened by the noise, had his carbine.

At this moment the window of the barn opened and I saw Salvatore's head appear.

At this apparition I own that I thought our guide had returned to his former calling, and that we had four bandits on our hands instead of three. But before this doubt had time to change into certainty, I heard a voice asking imperiously in Sicilian :

“Who are you? what do you want?”

“Salvatore?” said all three men together.

“Yes, Salvatore. Wait; I'm coming out.”

Ten seconds later the door opened and Salvatore appeared. He walked straight to the three men and began a conversation which, low as their voices were, seemed to me none the less vehement. For ten minutes they seemed to be disputing, the three men insisting upon something, he replying firmly. Presently the men retired to a little distance as if to take counsel with one another; Salvatore remained where he was, his arms crossed, his eyes fixed steadily on the others. Finally the man with the gun left the group, returned to Salvatore, shook him by the hand, and, rejoining his comrades, went away with them. In less than five minutes they disappeared in the darkness, and I heard nothing further than the sound of their steps on the shrivelled herbage.

Salvatore stood still for nearly a quarter of an hour, at the same place, in the same attitude; then,

as if certain that the nocturnal visitors had really departed, he returned to the barn and shut the door behind him.

The reader will understand that the scene I had just witnessed had taken away from me, at least for the moment, all desire to sleep. I remained for half an hour motionless as a statue in the attitude I had taken, with a finger on the trigger of my gun; then, at the end of the half-hour, as nothing happened and I heard no sounds, I resumed a less uncomfortable posture. Another half-hour had not gone by before, such is the extraordinary power of sleep, I was already in the arms of it.

The chill of the morning woke me. However beautiful the weather in Sicily may be, there always falls, just before the sun rises, a fine dew, icy and piercing. Happily the roof under which I was protected me somewhat, but I felt none the less the matutinal discomfort so well known to all travellers.

I was about to re-enter the room by the way I had left it when Jadin opened the window; he had just waked up and not seeing me on my mattress felt some uneasiness and was coming in search of me. I told him what had happened; he had heard nothing. This did honour to his powers of sleep, for not only had he been victimized by the vermin, but, I being absent, he had evidently paid for both. At least, so it seemed on a simple inspection of his person. He was tattooed from head to foot like a New Zealand savage.

We called Salvatore, who answered from the stable where he was saddling his mules; then, inasmuch as

there was, of course, no question of breakfast, and no town on our route till we came to Corleone where we expected to get some sort of a meal, we laid in a stock of chestnuts to amuse our appetites on the way. As for the bill, to our great astonishment it amounted, I know not how, to three piastres. I gave them, but I requested Salvatore to hand them over as alms not as payment.

We resumed our way in the same order as before, except that I walked for some distance, and for two reasons: first, to warm myself up; secondly, to have a little talk with Salvatore as to what had happened during the night. At the first word I said, he began to laugh; then, perceiving that I had taken part in the little drama from the rising of the curtain to its descent, he said:

"Yes, yes! they are old comrades who work by night instead of by day. If you had taken any other guide than me, it is probable there would have been trouble, and, after what you have just told me, matters would have gone hard with them; but you saw that, although I had to pull their ears a bit, they left the battle-field to us. Now we shall have no further trouble until we cross the Mezzojuso."

"What of the Mezzojuso?"

"That remains to be seen."

"Can't you have the same influence over those we meet there that you had over those of last night?"

"*Dame!*" responded Salvatore, with that Sicilian gesture that no words can render, "that's a new troop lately formed."

"And you don't know them?"

“No, but they know me.”

We reached the bank of a torrent which, after turning the wheel of a mill called the Oliva, flowed in a rather gentle course so that we were able to ford it. Salvatore asked permission to mount behind me, which I granted, and together we made the crossing satisfactorily, though, in spite of all precautions we were wet to the knees. Jadin came next and reached the bank safely; not so poor Cama, who was evidently destined to serve as our scapegoat. Hardly had his mule reached the middle of the stream when, badly guided by its rider, it deflected a few steps and sank into a hole. Cama uttered a shriek; we turned round and beheld him up to his waist in the water, while as for his mule nothing was visible but her head. The face of the luckless one was so grotesque, for in all the fatal events that happened to him he was intensely comical, that we could not help shouting with laughter.

This untimely hilarity reacted upon Cama, who tried to make his mule return to the way from which he had pulled her, but in spite of the efforts the animal herself made, she stepped on a stone and stumbled; the violence of the shock broke the girths, and instantly we saw Cama and our baggage floating away on the surface of the stream. Useful as the first and necessary as the second were to us, we ran ourselves to rescue the cook, while Salvatore ran after the baggage. In ten minutes man and property were both out of the water, but so wet, so streaming, that there was no possibility of continuing our way without stopping to dry off. So we lighted a

great fire with the dried herbage and dead olive-branches. We ourselves really needed it, for the morning air had chilled us, and we took an unspeakable pleasure in the free gigantic blaze such as woodsmen light in the forests and shepherds on the mountains; besides which, we roasted a dozen or more chestnuts. That was our breakfast.

While we were making this forced halt we saw a litter, carried on two mules, make its appearance, led by a conductor and escorted by four *campieri*. Within was a worthy prelate, fat and rosy, who, more prudent than ourselves, it seemed to me, had all the air, judging by the look of contempt that he cast on our collation, to be carrying his provisions with him. The four *campieri*, being wrapped in cloaks and armed with guns, gave a picturesque aspect to the procession. In spite of the difficulties that we had encountered, he crossed the little river without accident, thanks to the skill of his conductor.

At the end of an hour we broke camp, but no persuasion could induce Cama to remount his mule. Salvatore profited by this refusal to instal himself in the cook's place, and again we started, Cama following behind on foot.

The plain we crossed, if indeed such rough and tumbled surface could call itself a plain, presented a most grandiose aspect. Each time that we reached the summit of a little hillock we saw, before and behind us, vast and fantastic distances, such as one sees in dreams, so whimsically coloured by the sun that they seemed to lead to one of those fairy lands to which the feet of man cannot attain. Here and

there we could see upon the plain, along which it undulated like a snake of verdure, some rivulet dried up by the dog-days, its sinuosities defined by a line of oleanders, still thriving on the remains of the moisture; also, here and there, an isle of verdure, such as I have already described, rising in the desert of discoloured herbage, where millions of discontented grasshoppers were shrilling.

After a six or eight hours' march, under a sun so hot that the leather of our boots burned our feet, we saw the town where we expected to dine. It was only two or three rows of houses, one story high, built at equal distances one from another, looking at a little distance like children's toys.

On dismounting at the door of the principal inn, we noticed with pleasure that the establishment possessed certain cooking implements that did not seem wholly worthless. But Salvatore damped the joy this sight had given us by inviting us to make as much haste as possible, for the hour lost in drying ourselves in the morning had to be taken out of our dinner time, in order not to arrive too late at the rocks of the Mezzojuso. Hungry as we were, we understood the importance of this advice, and we urged the landlord to be as quick as possible. Nevertheless, we were forced to lose two hours in getting an execrable dinner.

We started again towards five o'clock. As the defile we were obliged to pass through was not more than six miles from Corleone (where we dined), we began to perceive it about a quarter past six. It was simply a passage between two mountains, one

perpendicular, the other with a very steep slope, covered with rocks that had rolled from the summit and been stopped in their downward course at various points. We expected to get there by seven o'clock ; that is to say, in broad daylight. Salvatore showed us the pass with the pointed end of his stick ; then, looking at us as if to see what effect his words would produce, he said :

“ If there is anything to fear, it will be there.”

“ Let us hasten, then,” I answered ; “ for if there is really any danger, better meet it in broad daylight, rather than wait till it overtakes us at night.”

“ On, then ! ” said Salvatore ; and resting his hand on the pommel of my saddle, he spurred the mules by his voice, and they started forward at a trot.

We approached the defile quite rapidly. Cama, not to delay us, had resumed his perch upon the baggage and followed us, clinging to the ropes that fastened the pack. He had heard a few words of Salvatore's fears and was very uneasy. I proposed to him, as Jadin had a carbine and I a double-barrelled gun, to take my pistols in order to give us a helping hand if need were ; but this offer made him almost tumble from his perch with fright. So Jadin kept the pistols in his holsters.

At a distance of three hundred steps or thereabouts from the pass, Salvatore halted my mule. As it was she who led the procession, the two others halted likewise ; then, telling us to remain where we were, because he had just detected the muzzle of a gun behind a rock, Salvatore left us and walked straight to the point he had indicated.

We profited by this little halt to see that our weapons were all in good condition. I had two balls in each barrel of my gun; Jadin had the same in the one barrel of his carbine, also in those of his pistols. As the pistols were double-barrelled, that gave us seven shots to fire, without counting that my gun was of a pattern that enabled me to reload it, in case of need, so rapidly that a second discharge would follow the first almost immediately.

We followed Salvatore with our eyes and an attention that can easily be understood. He walked with a firm and rapid step that showed not the slightest hesitation; presently we saw the form of another man loom up in an angle of the rocks; Salvatore went up to him, and both, after exchanging some words, disappeared behind the rock itself.

At the end of ten minutes Salvatore reappeared alone and came towards us. In vain we tried to read on his face from afar the news he brought us; it was quite impossible. At last, when he was only a few steps off, I said :

“ Well, what of it ? ”

“ Just what I expected ; they will not let us pass.”

“ How do you mean, they will not let us pass ? ”

“ That is to say, unless you pay your way.”

“ Are they very exacting ? ”

“ Oh, no ! In consideration of me they demand only five piastres.”

“ Ha ! ” said Jadin, laughing, “ that’s good ! what reasonable rascals ! I prefer having to do with them rather than with the innkeepers.”

“How many are there?” I asked.

“There are two.”

“What! two in all?”

“Yes, the others are on the road between Ar-
mianza and Polizzi.”

“What do you say, Jadin?”

“Well, I say that as there are but two, and we are four, it is our place to make them pay us five piastres.”

“My dear Salvatore,” I said, “have the kindness to go back to those gentlemen and tell them we advise them to keep quiet.”

“Or else,” added Jadin, “I will make Milord eat them — won’t you, Milord? Want to eat a robber, don’t you, old fellow? Hey?”

Milord gave two or three joyous bounds, in token of consent.

“Is that your last word?” asked Salvatore.

“The last.”

“Well, you are right. Only dismount, and walk on the other side of the mules; so that if in a fit of ill-temper they should take a fancy to fire at us, you will give them as little chance to aim as possible.”

The advice was good; we followed it immediately. As for Salvatore, whether he thought he had nothing to fear or that he despised the danger, he walked on, whistling, four steps in advance of the first mule; while we were behind ours and completely sheltered by their bodies.

Presently we saw the pointed hats of our bandits loom up above a breast of rock; we saw the muzzles of their guns aiming in our direction; but although

the track passed less than sixty paces from the spot where they lay in ambush, their hostility was confined to this demonstration, which was, perhaps, more defensive than offensive. At the end of another ten minutes we were out of range.

"Well, Cama," I said, turning towards our unfortunate cook, who, pale as death, was muttering prayers and kissing an image of the Madonna that he wore round his neck, "what do you think now of journeys by land?"

"Oh! monsieur," he cried, "I prefer the sea; on my word of honour I do."

"Well," I said to Salvatore, "you are a brave man; here are five piastres with which to drink our health."

Salvatore kissed my hand and we remounted the mules.

An hour later we arrived without further accident at the inn of San Lorenzo, where we obtained supper and beds that were detestable, for which they asked us on the following day four piastres. Decidedly Jadin was right. The real robbers in Sicily, those from whom there are no means of escaping, are the innkeepers.

XII

PALERMO FELICE. SEGESTA

MORE favoured by heaven than Girgenti, Palermo still deserves the name given to her twenty centuries ago; she is to-day as she was then, Palermo the Happy.

In fact, if there is a city in the world that unites all conditions for happiness, it is this careless daughter of the Phœnicians called Palermo Felice, whom the ancients represented seated like Venus in a golden shell. Built between Monte Pellegrino, which shelters her from the *tramontana*, and the chain of the Bagherias which protects her from the sirocco; lying on the shores of a gulf that has no rival but that of Naples; clasped by a verdurous girdle of orange and lemon trees, pomegranates, myrtles, aloes, and oleanders, which cool her with their shade and make her fragrant with their perfume; heiress of Saracens who left her their palaces, of the Normans who left her their churches, of the Spaniards who left her their serenades, — she is at one and the same time poetic as a sultana, graceful as a daughter of France, and amorous as an Andalusian. So her own peculiar happiness is one of those that come from God, which men cannot destroy. The Romans occupied her, the Saracens conquered her, the Normans possessed her, the Spaniards have

scarcely quitted her, and to all these different masters, whom she made her lovers, she smiled the same smile, soft wanton, she who has had no vigour except for endless pleasure.

Love is the principal business of Palermo; elsewhere people live, work, think, meditate, discuss, combat; in Palermo they love. The city felt the need of celestial protection. Men do not think always of God; but they sorely need some hidden power that shall think for them. Do not imagine that the Palermitans chose for this power a morose, exacting, scolding saint, stern, wrinkled, and disagreeable. Not at all; they took a beautiful virgin, young, indulgent, a flower of earth, a star of the sky, and made her their patron saint. Why so? Because a woman, chaste and saintly though she be, has always a little of the Magdalen in her; because a woman, though she die a virgin, comprehends love; because it was of a woman that God said: "Much shall be forgiven because she loved much."

So that when, after a rough, fatiguing, endless journey through solitudes burned by the sun, laid waste by floods, convulsed by earthquakes, without trees to shade by day, without lodging to sleep in at night, we beheld, on reaching the summit of a mountain, Palermo seated on the shores of her bay, gazing at herself in that azure sea, like Cleopatra in the streams of Cyrenaica, it will be believed that we uttered a cry of joy: at the mere sight of Palermo one forgets all. Palermo is a goal; it is spring after winter, it is rest after fatigue, it is day after night, shade after glare, the oasis after the desert.

At that first sight of Palermo all our weariness disappeared; we forgot the hard trot of the mules, we forgot the inns where hunger and thirst were the least of our troubles; we forgot those so-called roads where every angle, every rock, every quarry, hid a bandit watching for us, — we forgot it all in looking at Palermo, in breathing — in that sea-breeze that seemed rising to meet us.

We went down to the city along a road bordered on one side by enormous reeds and bathed on the other by the sea; the harbour was full of ships at anchor, the bay full of tiny sail-boats. About a league before reaching Palermo, villas covered with vines showed themselves, palaces shaded by palm-trees stood forth to meet us; and all had an atmosphere of joy delightful to see and feel — we had fallen into the middle of the fêtes in honour of Santa Rosalia, the patron saint of the city.

As we approached the town we hastened our steps. Palermo attracted us like that mountain in the “Arabian Nights” that vessels could not flee. After showing us from afar her domes, her towers and cupolas, which disappeared one by one as we advanced, she now opened to us her suburbs. We walked along a species of promenade overlooking the sea until we came to a gateway of Norman construction; the sentinel, instead of stopping us, saluted us, as if to say to us that we were very welcome.

In the middle of the square called the Marina a man came to us.

“These gentlemen are French?” he asked.

“Born in the heart of France,” replied Jadin.

"It is I who have the honour to be useful to the young gentlemen of your nation who visit Palermo."

"In what way do you serve them?" I asked.

"In all ways, Excellency."

"The deuce! you must be a valuable man. What is your name?"

"I have many names, Excellency; but as a general thing I am called *il Signore Mercurio*."

"Ah! I understand. Thank you."

"Here are the recommendations of the last French gentlemen who employed me; you can see that they were perfectly satisfied with my services."

So saying the Signore Mercurio showed me three or four very circumstantial and very indiscreet certificates which he had obtained from the gratitude of our compatriots; I glanced them over and passed them to Jadin, who read them.

"You gentlemen see that I am quite in due form."

"Yes, my good friend, but unfortunately I have no need of you."

"But you have, Excellency; gentlemen are always in need of me; if not for one thing, then for another: if you are rich, I will show you how to spend your money; if poor, I will help you to economize; are you artists, I'll show you pictures; are you men of society, I'll put you up to all the arrangements of social life in Palermo. I am all things, Excellency; guide, valet, antiquary, merchant, buyer, historian — and above all . . ."

"*Ruffiano*," said Jadin.

"*Sì, signore*," replied our strange interlocutor, with

an expression of proud confidence of which the reader can form no idea.

“You seem satisfied with your calling?”

“Satisfied, your Excellency! I am the happiest man on earth.”

“The deuce!” exclaimed Jadin in French; “that’s pleasant for decent men!”

“What does your friend say, Excellency?”

“He says that virtue is its own reward. I beg your pardon, my friend, but it is rather hot to be talking here in the sun; besides, we have just arrived, as you see, and are very tired.”

“These gentlemen are going to the Hôtel des Quatre-Cantons?”

“I believe so.”

“I shall go there to pay my respects to these gentlemen.”

“Thank you, that is useless.”

“Otherwise I should be failing in my duty; besides, I love Frenchmen, Excellency.”

“The deuce! that’s very flattering for our nation.”

“I shall go to the hotel.”

“Do as you choose, Signore Mercurio; but you will probably waste your time, I warn you.”

“That is my affair.”

“Adieu, Signore Mercurio.”

“Au revoir, Excellency.”

“What a scoundrel!” said Jadin.

We continued our way to the Hôtel des Quatre-Cantons. As I have said, Palermo wore a festal air which gave one pleasure to see. Flags floated from all the windows, great bands of brilliant stuffs

hung from the balconies, porticoes and wooden pyramids garlanded with flowers bloomed from end to end of every street. Salvatore took us round in a circuit and we passed in front of the episcopal palace. There was a huge machine of four or five storeys, forty-five to fifty feet high, shaped like those porcelain pyramids on which are served bonbons at dessert; this was in blue taffeta with silver fringes, and on it was the figure of a woman, holding a cross and surrounded by angels. It was the chariot or car of Santa Rosalia.

We reached the hotel; it was crowded with foreigners. By Salvatore's influence we obtained two little chambers which the landlord was reserving, he told us, for two Englishmen who were to arrive from Messina and had engaged them in advance. Perhaps this was only a trick to make us pay treble what they were worth; but such as they were and at the price they cost, we were only too lucky to get them.

We now settled our account with Salvatore, who asked for a recommendation, which we gave him with all our hearts. I added as a gift two piastres to the five I had already given him after safely issuing from the pass of Mezzojuso, and we parted mutually enchanted with one another.

We questioned the landlord as to the best use we could make of the day; there was nothing to be done, he said, till five in the afternoon but bathe and sleep. At five o'clock there was promenade on the Marina; at eight, fireworks on the seashore; throughout the evening illumination and dances at

the Flora ; at midnight, *Corso*. We asked for two baths, ordered our beds made ready, and hired a carriage.

At four they came to tell us that the table d'hôte was served ; we went down and found a table around which were collected specimens of all the peoples of the earth,—French, Spaniards, English, Germans, Poles, Russians, Wallachians, Turks, Greeks, Tunisians. We approached two of our compatriots, who, recognizing us on their side, came up to us. They were Parisians, men of society, and, above all, of intelligence, Baron de S—— and the Vicomte de R——. They had already been a week in Palermo, and as it is one of the claims of us Frenchmen to know every city at the end of a week as well as if we had lived there all our lives, this meeting was for us a perfect godsend.

After the dinner, which we found remarkably good, they told us our carriage was ready ; these gentlemen had theirs, and as we did not wish to separate altogether, we divided ; Jadin drove with the Vicomte de R——, and Baron de S—— with me.

The Marina is the promenade for carriages and horsemen, as the Flora is that of persons on foot.

There, as at Florence, as at Messina, every one who has or can get an equipage is obliged to come and make his or her *giro* between six and seven o'clock in the evening ; it is a very pleasant obligation ; nothing can be more charming than this esplanade of the Marina, lined on one side with palaces, on the other side by the bay communicating with the open sea that stretches away in front of the

city, her girdle of mountains inclosing and protecting her at the back. Then, that is to say, from six in the evening till two in the morning, blows the *greco*, a cool breeze from the northeast, which gives vigour to a whole population, who seem destined to sleep by day and live by night; for those are the hours when Palermo awakens, breathes, and smiles. Collected almost to a man on this beautiful quay, without other light than that of the stars, carriages, riders, and walkers pass and repass each other; talking, chattering, singing like a bevy of joyous birds; exchanging flowers, rendezvous, kisses; and all in haste for love or pleasure; drinking life in full draughts, caring little for that half of Europe which envies them, or for that other half which pities them.

Naples tyrannizes over Palermo, it is true; perhaps because Naples is jealous. But what cares Palermo for Neapolitan tyranny? Naples may take her money, Naples may lay waste her land, Naples may demolish her walls, but Naples cannot take away from her her Marina, bathed by the sea, her *greco* breeze that cools the night, her palm-trees that shade the morning, her orange-trees that perfume all things, and her loves;—her loves that cradle her with dreams when they do not waken her with their reality. It is said, “See Naples and die,” but I should rather say, “See Palermo and live.”

At nine o'clock a rocket went up, and the fête stopped short; carriages, horsemen, and foot-passengers stood still, for this was the signal for the fireworks, which are always displayed before the Palazzo Butera. The Prince of Butera is one of the great

seigneurs of the last century who have left many popular memories in Sicily, where, as everywhere else, such seigneurs are becoming few.

The fireworks over, there was division among the promenaders; some remained on the Marina, others departed towards La Flora. We were among the latter, and in five minutes' time we had reached the gate of that promenade, which is thought to be one of the finest botanical gardens in the world. It was magnificently illuminated, lanterns of a thousand shades of colour hung from the trees, and in the spaces where the roads crossed each other were bands of music, with burghers and people dancing to them.

We stayed in the Flora until ten o'clock; at ten the doors of the Cathedral opened to allow of the exit of fraternities, corporations, shrines of saints, and relics of martyrs who go to pay visits on one another. We were anxious not to miss this spectacle, and we made our way to the Cathedral, which we reached with great difficulty on account of the crowd.

The Cathedral, or church of Santa Rosalia, is a magnificent edifice of the twelfth century, its architecture half Norman half Saracen, full of ravishing details of miraculous finish, dentelled, scalloped, open-worked like a marble embroidery. The doors were open to every one; and the chancel, illuminated from top to bottom by lustres hanging from the roof, suspended one above another, cast a dazzling light; I have never, anywhere, seen anything to equal it. We walked around three or four times, stopping now and then, to count the eighty columns

of oriental granite that support the roof, and examine the splendid sarcophagi of porphyry, where sleep the great King Roger, his daughter Constance, and her husband, Henry VI. ; also his illustrious grandson Frederick II., whose sarcophagus, the finest of all, is borne on four lions. In 1781, these tombs were opened to verify the presence of the royal bones they were supposed to contain. The bodies of Henry and Constance were greatly decomposed, but that of Frederick, wrapped in sumptuous robes bearing Arabic inscriptions, with the crown, the imperial apple, and his sword beside him, was intact and scarcely disfigured. We consumed an hour and a half in this investigation ; then, as midnight was ringing, we got into our carriages and were driven to the Corso, which begins at midnight and takes place in the Via del Cassero.

This is the finest street in Palermo, and it runs from end to end of the city, being one mile and a half long from one extremity to the other. When the Arabian emirs settled in Palermo they chose for their residence an old castle at the eastern end of the town, which they fortified, giving to it the name of El Cassaer, hence the modern name Cassero ; the street is also, in imitation of Naples, called the Toledo. This street is crossed at right angles by another street, the Via Macqueda, or Strada Nuova, dividing the city into four distinct quarters. At the point where the two streets intersect they form a square, the four sides of which are occupied by four palaces, all alike, their façades adorned with statues of the viceroys.

Let the reader imagine this immense Via Cassero, illuminated from end to end, not merely at the windows, but on those porticoes and wooden pyramids I had already noticed in the daytime; filled from one extremity to the other with the carriages of all the princes, dukes, marquises, counts, and barons, with whom the place abounds, and in those carriages the handsomest women of Palermo, in their grand gala dresses; on each side of the roadway two solid hedges of people, concealing under their Sunday clothes the rags of their daily life; gay companies on all the balconies, flags at all the windows, invisible music everywhere, and he will have an idea of what the nocturnal Corso of Santa Rosalia is.

It was during this fête that the revolution of 1820 [against the Neapolitan viceroys] broke out. The Prince de la Cattolica tried to repress it, and marched the Neapolitan regiments quartered in Palermo against the people. But the latter rushed upon them, and before the soldiers had time for a second discharge, they were knocked down, disarmed, dispersed, and reduced to nothing. The insurgents then spread themselves through the town, shouting: "Death to the Prince de la Cattolica!" Hearing these cries, the prince took refuge with a friend who had a villa at Bagheria, about fifteen miles from Palermo; but the people followed him. The prince, pursued from room to room, crept between two mattresses. The populace entered the room in which he was, hunted on all sides, and left without finding him. Then the prince, hearing no further noise and believing himself alone, came out of his hiding-place;

but a child hidden behind the door saw him, called to the murderers, and the prince was killed.

He, like the Prince of Butera, was one of the great seigneurs of Palermo, but was far from being as popular and beloved as the latter. Both were ruined by the prodigalities without number they each indulged in ; but the Prince of Butera never knew it, and probably never suspected it, for his tenants, by unanimous agreement, continued to pay him an enormous rental, and whenever, in spite of that payment, the prince's steward wrote to them, "The prince lacks money," the coffers were filled as if by miracle, and in some instances these worthy people sold their marriage jewels to do it. The Prince de la Cattolica, on the contrary, was always quarrelling with his creditors ; so that after a magnificent fête he had just given to the Court, King Ferdinand, seeing that he did not know which way to turn for money, granted him by royal ordinance twenty-four years to pay his debts. Backed by this ordinance the prince sent his creditors to the right-about.

As the Prince of Butera had, in 1820, been dead some years, the old Prince of Paterno, the most popular man in Sicily after him, was obliged to come forward to pacify the people and stop the massacres. He did more ; when General Pepe and his troops presented themselves in the name of the provisional government and demanded an entrance to Palermo, the old prince managed so well that both sides were induced to sign a treaty. The Palermitans, desiring to give to this agreement the form of a treaty, that it might never be considered a capitulation, exacted

that the said treaty should be drawn up and signed outside of Sicily. And the conditions were actually discussed, agreed upon, and signed on board of an American vessel lying at anchor in the harbour. One of the articles stipulated that the Neapolitans should enter without beat of drum. At the gate of the town the drum-major, from habit, made the ordinary sign and the march began; instantly a man of the people threw himself on the drum that was nearest to him and ripped it open with his knife. They attempted to arrest the man, but the whole town showed plainly that it was ready to rise again. General Pepe at once ordered the drumsticks back to the belts; and the terms imposed by the Palermitans were put, after this slight infraction, into complete execution.

But the treaty was soon violated, not only in single articles, but in all its parts. In the first place, the Neapolitan parliament refused to ratify it; next, the Austrians having returned to Naples, Cardinal Gravina, appointed lieutenant-general for the king in Sicily, published a decree that annulled all that had taken place since the hereditary prince had left the island. Then extortions began, never to cease again, and very strange things were seen. I will cite two or three examples to give an idea of the manner in which taxes are imposed and collected in Sicily.

The city of Messina had a right over communal taxation, and out of this revenue it paid any over-plus to the land-tax. The king took the communal right for himself, and exacted that the city should

continue to pay over the surplus, though it no longer had rights over the property.

The Prince of Villa-Franca had an estate which he made into a rice plantation and which, bringing in about 6000 *onces* (72,000 francs) had been taxed on that sum. The government discovered that the irrigations made for this crop were injurious to the health of the inhabitants; it forbade the Prince of Villa-Franca to continue growing rice. The prince obeyed and put his land into wheat and cotton; but as this crop was much less lucrative than the other the revenue fell from 72,000 francs to 6000. But the Prince of Villa-Franca was made to pay the same tax as before, namely 900 ounces, that is to say, 5000 francs more than the estate yielded him.

In 1831 clouds of locusts settled upon Sicily; the property-owners wished to unite with one another in destroying them, but, reunions of individuals beyond a certain number being forbidden, the king made known that on payment of a tax which he was about to establish he would take upon himself the destruction of the locusts. In spite of appeals the tax was levied; the king did not destroy the locusts; they disappeared of themselves when they had eaten up the harvest, and — the tax remained!

It was exactions such as these, of which I have related the most insignificant, that produced the deep hatred which exists between the Sicilians and Neapolitans, — hatred surpassing that of England and Ireland, of Belgium and Holland, of Portugal and Spain.

Nevertheless, this great hatred between the two people has been somewhat calmed of late. I speak of the years 1833, 1834, 1835. The King of Naples, on his accession to the throne, desirous of accomplishing the hopes and wishes of the Sicilians, sent his brother to Palermo with the rank of viceroy. The Count of Syracuse was not only a young man but almost a child; he was, I think, scarcely eighteen years old. At first this extreme youth frightened his subjects; a few boyish pranks increased their uneasiness; but under the friction of public affairs the boy became a man, he understood the high mission he had to fulfil in reconciling Naples and Palermo; he dreamed for this poor ruined, enslaved, crushed Sicily a social and artistic renaissance. Two years after his arrival, Sicily breathed as if she were awaking from an iron-bound sleep. The young prince had now become the idol of her people.

But then there happened what happens always in like circumstances; the men who battered on the disorder, ruin, and abasement of Sicily saw that their reign would end if that of the prince continued. The natural kindness of the viceroy became on their lips calculated ambition, the gratitude of the populace a tendency to revolt. The king surrounded, circumvented, teased, conceived suspicions as to the fidelity of his brother.

Matters were thus when the carnival occurred. The Count of Syracuse, a handsome young fellow, loving pleasure, joined in all the fêtes, eagerly seizing every occasion of them. Neapolitan, and consequently accustomed to a noisy and animated

carnival, he organized a magnificent cavalcade, in which he took the part of Richard Cœur de Lion, and invited the Sicilian nobles, who wished to please him, to take the other characters in the novel of "Ivanhoe." They all hastened to accept the invitation. The cavalcade was so splendid that the fame of it reached Naples.

"What part did my brother take?" asked the king.

"Sire," replied the bearer of the news, "his Royal Highness represented the personage of Richard Cœur de Lion."

"Ah! yes, yes!" murmured the king; "he Richard Cœur de Lion, and I John Lackland! — I understand."

Eight days later the Count of Syracuse was recalled.

This disgrace gave him fresh popularity in Sicily, where every one, seeing him at close hand, did justice to his intentions and knew he was guiltless of the ambition of which his brother suspected him. King Ferdinand, on his side, knowing that he had lost a part, at least, of his popularity, was sulky to his insular subjects. For the first time since his accession to the throne he allowed the fête of Santa Rosalia to take place without being present in the cathedral at the solemn mass which is celebrated there in honour of it.

Such were the feelings of hatred and animosity that I found throughout Sicily towards the people and government of Naples; although it must be owned that these political emotions did not hinder

in any visible manner the Palermitan proclivities for pleasure.

One of the things that struck me most on arriving there was the difference between the Neapolitan character and the Sicilian character; a crossing of a day separates the two capitals, a strait four miles wide parts the two kingdoms, and yet one might think them a thousand leagues from one another. At Naples you find shouts, gesticulations, eternal noise without due cause; at Messina or Palermo you meet silence, sobriety of gesture, almost taciturnity. Ask a question of a Palermitan, a sign, a word, rarely a sentence answers you; ask the Neapolitan, and not only will he reply at full length, prolixly, but presently he himself will be questioning you in turn and you cannot get rid of him. The Palermitan shouts and gesticulates also, but only in moments of passion or anger; the Neapolitan does so all the time. The normal condition of one is noise; the habitual state of the other is silence.

The two distinctive characteristics of the Sicilian are bravery and disinterestedness. The Prince of Butera, whom I cite as the type of a great Palermitan noble, gave an example of those two virtues in one day.

A riot occurred in Palermo, brought on by a money crisis. The people were literally dying of hunger; they reasoned that it were better to die of a ball or a cannon-shot, because the death struggle in that way was less long and less painful.

The king and queen on their side, who had not much money themselves, could not buy wheat, and

would not reduce the taxes ; they pointed a cannon down each street and made ready to answer the people with that *ultima ratio regum*. One of these cannon commanded the end of the Via Cassero, where it opens on the square of the Royal Palace. The populace marched on the palace and consequently on the cannon. The gunner, with lighted match, stood ready ; the people advanced, the gunner put the match nearer to the touch-hole ; at that moment Prince Ercola di Butera came from a cross street and, without saying a word or making a sign, he seated himself on the cannon's mouth.

As he was the most popular man in Sicily the people welcomed him with shouts of joy. He made sign that he wished to speak. The gunner, dumb-founded, after putting his match three times near the touch-hole without the prince deigning to notice it, lowered it to the ground. The people kept silence as if under a spell ; they listened.

The prince made them a long speech, in which he explained how the Court, driven from Naples, stripped by the English, and reduced to its Sicilian revenue, was itself starving ; he told how King Ferdinand went hunting to get food, and said he had dined with his Majesty a few days earlier, when there was nothing to eat but the game the king had killed.

The people listened, saw the justice of his arguments, uncocked their guns, put them over their shoulders, and dispersed.

Ferdinand and Caroline saw the whole affair from their windows. They sent for the Prince of Butera, who made them, in their turn, a very sensible speech

on the disorder of their treasury. The two sovereigns then with one voice offered him the place of minister of finance.

"Sire," replied the Prince of Butera, "I have never administered anything but my own fortune, and that I have spent."

So saying, he made his bow to the sovereigns he had just saved and retired to his palace on the Marina, far more a king than King Ferdinand.

The Corso lasted two hours, and at two in the morning we returned to our hotel amid illuminations half extinguished and serenaders half asleep. We found awaiting us an invitation to dine on the morrow with the viceroy, the Prince of Campo Franco. We had sent him, on arriving, our letters of introduction, and with that perfect politeness to be found only among the great Italian seigneurs he honoured them at once.

The Prince of Campo Franco has four sons; the second of whom is the Count Lucchesi-Palli, who married the Duchesse de Berry. He was just then in Sicily for the purpose of burying in his family vault the body of the little girl born during the captivity at Blaye, who had just died. As this invitation for dinner was at the country-seat of the viceroy, situated, like nearly all the villas of the rich Palermitans, at La Bagheria, we started two or three hours earlier than the time appointed, in order to visit on the way the famous palace of the Prince of Palagonia, a model of grotesqueness, and a miracle of folly. It was in the environs of La Bagheria that Roger, Count of Sicily and Calabria, won from the

Saracens about the year 1072 the great battle that gave him Palermo.

Our carriage stopped before the palace of the Prince of Palagonia, which we recognized at once by the unnumbered monsters which adorned the walls, surmounted the gates, and crawled about the gardens; there were shepherds with asses' heads, young girls with horses' heads, cats with faces of Capuchin monks, bicephalous children, men with four legs, one-footed human creatures with four arms, a menagerie of impossible beings to whom the prince prayed God, every time his wife was pregnant, to give reality by permitting the princess to give birth to some creature like unto those he carefully spread before her eyes in order to bring about that happy result. Unfortunately for the prince, God had the good sense not to listen to his prayers, and the princess brought into the world none but children like all other children, unless, to be sure, they find themselves inheriting some fine day the singular madness of their father.

Another fancy of the prince was to procure all the horns he ever heard of, — horns of cattle, horns of deer, antlers of stags, goats' horns, rams' horns, elephants' tusks even; all bony protuberances of curved and pointed shape were welcomed at the palazzo, and bought by the prince almost without bargaining. So from the antechamber to the boudoir, from the cellar to the garret, that palace bristled with horns; horns held up the draperies, and suspended the chandeliers; curtains were looped back with horns; buffets, testers, and bookshelves, were surmounted by

horns. One might have offered twenty-five louis for a horn of any kind, and in all Palermo it could not have been found.

Art, of course, had nothing to do with such debauchery of the imagination; palace, court, gardens, are all in the vilest taste, and made one think it a house built and inhabited by a colony of madmen. Jadin would not compromise his pencil by sketching it.

The villa of the Prince of Campo Franco is, without contradiction, one of the most delightful, especially for situation, to be found anywhere. The dinner was magnificent, but wholly Sicilian; that is to say, many ices and quantities of fruit, but very little fish or flesh. We must have seemed ichthyophagists and carnivora of the first rank, Jadin and I, for we were the only ones who ate seriously. After dinner, coffee was served on a terrace covered with flowers, which looked upon the bay, a part of Palermo, and Monte Pellegrino. The hour we passed on that terrace, during which we saw the sun go down and the landscape pass through every gradation of light from vivid gold to sombre blue, is one of those indescribable hours that we find in our memory when we close our eyes, but which can never be rendered by a pen or pictured by a pencil.

The next day we devoted to the sights of the city; a young man, Arami, a college friend of the Marchese di Gargallo, was to accompany us, dine with us, and take us to the Opera. We began by the churches. The Duomo had the first claim, but we had already gone through it on the day of our

arrival; so we crossed the square and found ourselves in front of the Palazzo Reale, which is built upon the foundations of the ancient Saracenic Al Cassar. We entered it principally to see two things: the famous Syracusan rams which were transported there, and the chapel of San Pietro, otherwise called the Capella Palatina, which, in spite of seven hundred years of existence, looks as if it had just come from the hands of the Greek mosaic workers.

We looked on all sides for the rams, and at last they were pointed out to us, coquettishly painted in sky blue. We asked to what ingenious artist belonged the idea of painting them of that agreeable colour, and were told it was the Marchese di Forcella. We asked where he lived, that we might leave our cards upon him.

Not so with the Capella Palatina; it remains a miracle of architecture and of ornamentation. No doubt the reverence in which it is held owes something to tradition (tradition respected and transmitted by the Saracens), which asserts that Saint Peter, going from Jerusalem to Rome, did himself consecrate the little subterranean chapel which now forms the mortuary vault of the Norman building. The solemn beauty of the latter, especially at the hour when the sun sends a wondrous glow through the richly coloured windows, is equalled only, and not surpassed, by that of San Marco in Venice.

From this chapel we went to the Observatory, where, on the 1st of January, 1801, Piazzzi discovered, thanks to Ramsden's instrument, the planet Ceres. As our designs were less ambitious we contented our-

selves with looking eastward for the isles of Æolus, little specks upon the surface of the sea, and westward to the village of Monreale and its gigantic monastery.

To make an end of sight-seeing, we ordered our coachman to drive to the Saracenic castles, named Ziza and Cuba, though our friend Arami, in whom we placed great confidence, assured us there was no important tradition attached to them. The Ziza is the best preserved, and still shows a fine Moorish room, with an arched ceiling decorated in arabesques and mosaics. As for the Cuba, it is turned into barracks.

Near these two Moorish castles stands a Christian monastery of great reputation. It is the convent of the Capuchins, the fame of which is derived from the singular property possessed by its cellars of *mummifying* dead bodies, and preserving them free from corruption until they turn into dust. When we arrived at the convent the father in charge of visitors took us straight to these catacombs. We went down thirty steps and found ourselves in a vast subterranean chamber in the form of the cross, lighted from above, where a spectacle awaited us of which no words can give a just idea.

Let the reader imagine fifteen hundred dead bodies reduced to the condition of mummies, grinning in rivalry with one another; some appearing to laugh, others to weep; some opening their mouths immeasurably to loll out a black tongue between toothless jaws, others pinching their lips convulsively, — shrivelled, twisted, bony, distorted human caricatures,

palpable nightmares, spectres a thousand times more hideous than skeletons hanging in the closets of anatomists, all arrayed in Capuchin robes, and holding in their hands a ticket on which is their name, the date of their birth, and that of their death. The body nearest the door, who in life was named Francesco Tollari, carried in his hand a stick; I asked the father who took us round to explain that symbol. He answered that the said Francesco Tollari, being nearest the door, was appointed to the dignity of concierge, and was given a stick to prevent the others from going out. This explanation put me greatly at my ease; and it showed the degree of respect felt by the worthy monks for their lodgers. In other lands men laugh at death; here they laugh at the dead: that is progress.

It must be said that in this collection of mummies those that are not hideous are laughable. They are placed sometimes in two rows, sometimes in three rows one above another, side by side, on projecting planks, so that those of the lower row seem to serve as caryatides to those of the second row, and those of the second to the third row. Beneath the feet of the first row are wooden chests, more or less valuable, and more or less richly decorated with heraldic bearings, monograms, and crowns. These chests inclose the dead for whom the relations provide a coffin; but the coffins are not like ours, for eternity; they have lids with locks, of which the relations keep the key. From time to time the heirs come to see if those whose fortune they are spending are still there; their uncle, grandfather, or wife makes a grimace at

them and they are satisfied. Consequently you may make the round of Sicily without hearing a single one of those poetic tales of ghosts and phantoms which terrorize long evenings at the North. For the Southerner a dead man is dead ; there is no midnight hour at which he rises ; no cock-crow at which he disappears ; how can any one believe in ghosts when they have them under lock and key, and keep the key in their pocket ?

Besides these niches occupied by the ruck of the dead, besides the chests reserved for the aristocracy, one arm of this vast mortuary cross forms a species of private vault, and is reserved for the ladies of the upper Palermitan society. It is there that death is most hideous ; the bodies, lying beneath glass cases, are dressed in their richest clothes, — the matrons in ball or court costume, the young girls in white gowns with their virginal chaplets. One can hardly endure the sight of those faces decked with flowers and ribbons, those withered arms issuing from pink or blue satin sleeves, their bony fingers wearing gloves four times too large for them, and those shrivelled feet in silken slippers, their bones and sinews plainly visible through open-worked silk stockings. One of these corpses, horrible to see, held a palm in her hand and had this epitaph inscribed on the plinth of her mortuary bed :

SAPER VUOI DICHI CIACCE, IL SENSO VERO : ANTONIA

PEDOCHE FIOR

PASSAGGIERO VISSE ANNI XX E MORI A XXV

SETTEMBRE 1834.

Another body not less dreadful to look at, lying in a *crêpe* gown and a coronet on a lace pillow, is that of the Signora D. Maria Amaldi e Ventimiglia, Marchessina di Spataro, died August 7, 1834, aged 29. This corpse was strewn with fresh flowers; the monk whom we questioned told us that the flowers were renewed every day by Baron P——, who had loved her. A love mighty indeed! that could resist for two years so terrible a sight!

We had been in these catacombs two hours and thought we had seen everything, when the attendant monk told us he had kept for the last the most interesting thing of all, namely, a sight of the dead bodies in process of desiccation. We had gone too far to shrink back now, so we told him to go before us and we would follow.

He lighted a torch and opened a little cavern dark as night, and entered before us. Then, by the ruddy glare of his torch we saw one of the most horrible sights it is possible to see, — a body, entirely naked, fastened to a species of iron railing, the feet, hands, and jaws bound, to prevent as much as possible the sinews from contracting; a stream of water flowed beneath it and did the desiccation, which is usually completed in six months. The dead person, now passed into a mummy, is then clothed, adorned, and put in his or her place. There are four of these vaults, each of which can contain three or four bodies. They are called the *rotting-vats* [*pourrissoirs*].

The guests of this ossuary have their fête-days, on which they are dressed in their Sunday clothes, clean

linen, and posies in their belts. The doors of the catacombs are then opened to their parents and friends. Some, however, retain their every-day clothes with a sombre air. Then their relations, who think they know what saddens them, ask if they have need of anything and if a mass or two would be agreeable to them. The dead reply with a motion of the hand, or a nod, that that is what they want. Then the relations pay the convent for a certain number of masses, and the following year they have the satisfaction of seeing their dead beflowered and wearing their best clothes, in sign that they have left purgatory and are enjoying eternal beatitude.

Is not all this a very strange profanation of sacred things? And does not our entombing seem a far more religious way of returning dust to dust? I confess I saw daylight and flowers and breathed the fresh air with relief; it seemed to me that I had wakened from a fearful nightmare, and though I had not touched any of the inhabitants of that gloomy abode, I was pursued by a corpse-like odour from which I could not free myself.

After dinner we went to the Opera; two of the principal seigneurs in Sicily, who undertook its management, had succeeded in obtaining a rather good company; the opera was "Norma," Bellini's masterpiece.

I had often heard of the Sicilian habit of *dialoguing* by gestures, from one end of a place to another, or from the upper to the lower part of a hall or theatre. This science, to which the language of the deaf and dumb is but *a b c*, goes back, if we are to

believe tradition, to the days of Dionysius the Tyrant. He prohibited gatherings and conversations under the severest penalties; the result was that his subjects sought and found a means of communication that took the place of words. Between the acts I noticed very lively communications between the boxes and stalls. Arami, especially, recognized a friend across the house, whom he had not seen for three years, and who made him with his eyes and sometimes with his hands what seemed to be a narrative, judging by the eager gestures of my companion, which showed the deepest interest. This *conversatio* ended, I asked if, without indiscretion, I might be told the facts that seemed to excite our friend Arami so much. "Oh, dear, yes," he said; "the man I talked with is one of my best friends, absent from Palermo for three years. He tells me he was married in Naples; then he travelled with his wife in Austria and in France. There his wife gave birth to a daughter whom, unfortunately, he has lost. He arrived by the steamboat yesterday, but, as his wife suffered much from seasickness, she has stayed in bed, and that is the reason he has come to the theatre alone."

"My dear fellow," I said to Arami, "if you want me to believe all that you must do me a kindness."

"What is it?"

"Not leave my side this whole evening, so that I may be certain you do not give the cue to your friend, and when we meet him in the foyer ask him to repeat aloud what he said to you."

"Willingly," replied Arami.

The second act of "Norma" was played, and then the audience adjourned to the foyer, where we met the traveller.

"My dear friend," said Arami, "I could not quite make out what you said to me; do me the kindness to repeat it."

His friend then repeated his history word for word, without changing one syllable from the translation Arami had given me of those signs. It was indeed miraculous.

Six weeks later I saw a second example of this silent communication; it happened in Naples. I was walking with a young man from Syracuse; we passed a sentinel; this soldier and my companion exchanged two or three grimaces which in any other place I should not even have noticed.

"Poor devil!" murmured my friend.

"What did he tell you?" I asked.

"Well, I thought I recognized him for a Sicilian, and I asked him as I passed to what city he belonged; he told me he was from Syracuse, and knew me perfectly well. Then I asked him how he liked the Neapolitan service; he told me he was so unhappy in it that if his superiors continued to treat him as they did he should certainly desert. I told him if he was reduced to that extremity to count on me, and I would help him all I could. The poor devil thanked me with all his heart; and I don't doubt he will be after me before long."

Three days later I was in my friend's apartment when they came to tell him that a man, who would not give his name, wanted him. He went

out, leaving me alone for ten minutes. On his return he said:

“Did n’t I say so?”

“Say what?”

“That that poor devil would desert.”

“Ha! ha! was it your soldier who wanted you?”

“Himself: an hour ago his sergeant struck him, and he ran his sword through the sergeant’s body. Now, as he does n’t care to be shot, he came and asked me for two or three ducats; the day after tomorrow he will be in the mountains of Calabria, and in two weeks in Sicily.”

“What will he do when he gets there?” I asked.

“Heu!” said the Syracusan, with a gesture impossible to describe, “he will make himself a bandit.”

I hope that my friend’s compatriot was not forced to fail in carrying out the prediction, and that he is at this moment honourably exercising his profession between Girgenti and Palermo.

The next day we started for Segesta, with the intention of stopping on our return at Monreale.

It is about twenty-four miles from Palermo to the tomb of Ceres, and yet we were warned to take as many precautions for this little trip as we had taken for the journey from Girgenti to Palermo, robbers having a singular affection for this particular road, deserted most of the time, it is true, but all visitors to Sicily take it, so that the bandits are sure when a traveller falls into their hands that the lack of quantity is made up in quality.

We were five men well armed, and Milord, who

was well worth a sixth; so there was not much to fear. We took an open carriage, our double-barrelled guns between our legs, — all but one of us, who sat by the coachman, his carbine slung on his shoulder, — Milord followed the carriage, showing his teeth, and by means of these precautions we reached our destination without accident.

As far as Monreale the road is enchanting, through the region of the well-named Conca d'Oro, a vast basin of emerald, glittering with oranges and lemons, studded with oleanders, myrtles, and orange-blossoms (for the trees bloom and fruit at the same time), while above them, here and there, some noble palm-tree waved its African plume. Beyond Monreale, on the slope of the mountain towards Alcamo, the aspect changes; vegetation dries up, verdure disappears, the wild herbage recovers its power, and we are once more in a desert. At a turn of the road, in one of the most picturesque positions in the world, we came in sight of the sole building still left of the ancient city, the temple of Demeter, standing on a species of platform, whence it commands the desert, a sad and melancholy vestige of a lost civilization.

A Trojan prince named Hippotes had a very beautiful daughter named Egesta, for whom he dreaded the great sea-monster whom Poseidon had sent against Laomedon, King of Troy, the latter having forgotten to pay to the said god the sum agreed upon for the building of the walls of Troy. Now the first victim offered to appease the monster was Hesione, daughter of the forgetful debtor. But Heracles, who chanced to see her as he was passing,

delivered her, and then the monster, very hungry, imposed the cruel condition on the Trojans that yearly a young girl should be given him to devour. The fathers and mothers cried out; but hungry stomachs have no ears; the monster held firm, and the Trojan people had to do as he chose. Hippotes, fearing that the choice might fall on his beautiful daughter, preferred to put her in a boat filled with provisions and cast her adrift upon the sea. Hardly was this done before a soft breeze from the Dardanelles wafted the boat so far and so well that it came to the shore near Drepanum at the mouth of the river Crimissus. Now the Crimissus was one of the most gallant streams of antiquity, brother to the Scamander and first cousin to the Alpheus; no sooner did he see the beautiful Egesta than he disguised himself as a black dog and paid his court to her. She, being tired with her voyage, had seated herself in the shade of a tree after eating a few pomegranates she had gathered on landing, and falling fast asleep she dreamed a dream like those of Leda and Europa, and nine months later gave birth to two sons; one she named *Æolus* (not to be confounded with the god of the winds), the other *Acestes*. History does not record what became of *Æolus*, but *Acestes* built a city on the banks of his father, and called it by his mother's name, *Egesta*.

The town was nearly built when *Æneas*, driven from Troy, came to Drepanum [now Trapani]. He sent some of his lieutenants ashore to explore the land; who reported that they had found a people of the same origin and speaking the same language

as their own. Æneas landed immediately, went to the city, and, meeting Acestes among his workmen, the two princes saluted, named themselves, and so became aware that they were cousins-german. All this is explained in the 5th book of the Æneid, which is about the last mention of the good King Acestes that we find in history.

This wise king dead, his subjects must needs pick a quarrel with the Selinuntians; and the poor little people, after many vicissitudes, being unable to hold their own, appealed for help to the Athenians. The Athenians were always very obliging if well paid, so they first made sure of the pecuniary means of the Egestans by sending deputies, to whom were shown vases of gold and silver kept in the temple of Demeter. Being thus convinced, Athens sent Nicias, who began by asking an advance of thirty talents, about twenty thousand francs of our money; the Egestans thought this reasonable and paid it. Nicias then joined his cavalry with theirs and together they seized the town of Hyccara and sold the inhabitants, who brought in a total of one hundred and twenty talents (about eighty thousand francs), half of which should have gone to the Egestans, but Nicias forgot to give it to them. Among the women who were sold was a young girl twelve years old, already famous for her beauty. This young girl, carried to Corinth, became the celebrated Laïs, whose beauty obtained such fame that painters came in crowds, says Athenæus, to gain inspiration from the mere sight of it. But all were not admitted to her presence; the sight of her cost so dear that from the

price she put upon it came the proverb, "It is not given to every one to get to Corinth."

But the triumph of Egesta did not last long. Nicias was beaten, taken prisoner, and condemned to death. Egesta fell again under the dominion of the Selinuntians, and so remained until Hannibal Gisgon destroyed Selinunto after eight days' assault, 409 B. C., when Egesta naturally became part and parcel of the victor's spoils. At the time of the first Punic war she revolted; but the Carthaginians never went in for half-measures, they razed the town and carried to Carthage all that was precious.

The Romans triumphed, and then the unfortunate, dying town, recovered a little life. Sustained by the Senate, which gave it a rich territory and added an S to its name, to remove the idea of the word *egestas*, which means beggary, the city rebuilt its houses, temples, and walls. But its walls were scarcely up when it had the imprudent courage to refuse to pay tribute to Agathocles. That was the end of Segesta; the tyrant put the inhabitants to death as one man; the temple alone survived that universal destruction; and there it stands still, dedicated to Demeter. In this temple was the famous bronze statue of Demeter, which was taken by the Carthaginians when they razed the town, returned to the Segestans by Scipio Africanus, and finally stolen forever by Verres during his prætorship.

Two little streams, which were dry when we crossed them, were once the Scamander, and the Simoïs, in memory of the two Trojan rivers. The temple, one of the best-preserved Doric temples in

existence, is grandly impressive in this desolate spot.

It was never finished; the columns are unfluted; many of the stones of the basement still have the knobs left on them by which the workmen were pushing them into place when Hannibal Gisgon's army swept down upon the city, and drove them away. So strong is the impression conveyed by that one fact of the stones lying ready and waiting to be placed, that we look about us half expecting to see the men returning to their work. Truly a thousand years, nay, two thousand years, are but as yesterday! ¹

Jadin made a sketch of the temple; I left him one of the men of our escort to protect him, and started myself to hunt across the great plain covered with thistles and fennel. In spite of the favourable nature of the ground for sport, the only living things I met were two adders, one of which I killed with the heel of my boot, the other with my gun. While hunting we came upon the ruins of a Greek theatre, but it was so small an affair, after those of Taormina and Siracusa, that I cared more for the view to be seen from its upper præcinctio, commanding the azure bay of Castellamare, the ancient harbour of Segesta.

Our coachman was not willing to risk returning to Palermo that evening; all that he consented to do was to let us choose whether to sleep at Calatafimi or at Alcamo. As the keeper of the temple assured us that the rector of Alcamo kept an inn, we decided

¹ The temple commands a view of the field where Garibaldi won his great victory, May 20, 1860. — Tr.

for the latter place. I have too much respect for the church to say anything here of the inn of the rector of Alcamo. We started the next morning at six o'clock ; at nine we reached Monreale, where we breakfasted and then went to see the cathedral.

The Cathedral of Monreale is perhaps the most precious existing monument of the union of Greek, Norman, and Saracenic architecture. William the Good began it about the year 1180, as the result of a vision. Wearied in hunting, he lay down to sleep beneath a tree ; the Virgin appeared to him and revealed that a treasure was buried at the foot of that tree. William dug up the earth, found the treasure, and built the cathedral. The doors, dating from 1186, are on the model of those of San Giovanni in Florence ; the following inscription engraved on one of them leaves no doubt as to their maker : *Bonanus, civis Pisanus, me fecit* — “ Bonano, citizen of Pisa, made me.”

William ordered that his tomb should be placed in the temple he had built, whither he transported the bodies of Margaret his mother, William the Bad his father, and two brothers dying young. His request was eventually fulfilled, but in a singular way. Having died suddenly of a fever on his return from Syria, in the twenty-sixth year of his age and the twenty-fourth of his reign, he was buried by his successor, Tancred the Bastard, at the foot of the tomb of his father, William the Bad. It was not until 1575 that his bones were exhumed by the Archbishop Don Luis del Torre, and placed in a white marble tomb raised on a platform of the same

marble. A pyramid rose from the centre of this tomb, on one face of which were engraved these words of the hundred and seventeenth psalm, which the Norman kings had adopted as their motto : *Dextera Domini fecit virtutem.*

In 1811 the cathedral took fire ; part of the roof fell and damaged these tombs more or less. Those of Margaret and the two children were wholly destroyed. That of William the Good, when opened, was found to contain little more than a skull, to which hung a long strand of auburn hair, indelible sign of the Norman race. These bones were inclosed in a wooden case, painted blue, covered with stars, and marked with a red cross. The body did not seem to have been embalmed. But the tomb that attracted more especially the attention of antiquaries was that of William the Bad. On opening the sarcophagus they found, first, a cypress case wrapped in a species of satin-cloth of a dead-leaf colour ; and that case being opened, the body of the king was seen in a state of perfect preservation, although six centuries and a half had passed away since his burial. In conformity with the description given by history, it was seen that he was six feet tall. The face and all his limbs were intact, except the right hand, which was missing ; a red beard, with drooping moustache, came down upon his breast ; his hair was of the same colour, and a few locks torn from the skull were scattered on the left side of the coffin. The corpse was clothed in three tunics, one over another ; the first was a species of long jacket of gold-coloured satin, that still preserved a fine lustre ; it fell from the

neck to the calves of the legs, and was made full at the hips. Beneath this garment was another, of linen, falling also from the neck like the first, and descending half-way down the leg. This was very like the alb of a priest; and it was fastened round the waist by a silken belt, the two ends of which were joined by a buckle. Beneath this second garment was a shirt also starting from the neck but covering the whole body. The legs wore long satin-cloth boots coming nearly up to the thigh, where their tops were folded over to the depth of three inches. The colour of this cloth was dead-leaf, and it seemed to have been cut from the same piece that covered the coffin. The left hand, the only one remaining, was bare, and close to it lay the glove of the right hand; this glove was knitted of gold-coloured silk, without any seam.

Close to the cathedral is the Benedictine abbey, and adjoining the abbey is the cloister, a marvellous construction in Moorish style, supported by two hundred and sixteen columns, of which not one presents the same ornamentation as any of the others. On one of the capitals we see William the Good on his knees, offering his church to the Virgin. It is this cloister that served as a model for the one in the third act of "*Robert le Diable*."

They were valiant men, it must be owned, those Normans. In the seventh century they left Norway and appeared among the Gauls. Charlemagne spent his life in repulsing them; and when, thinking he was rid of them forever, he saw their numerous vessels reappearing on the horizon, the old emperor was so discouraged — not for himself but for his

descendants — that he crossed his arms and wept silently over the future. He was not mistaken ; a century had not gone by before they sailed up the Seine and besieged Paris. Repulsed in Neustria by Eudes, son of Robert the Strong, they clung to the soil, from which it was impossible to dislodge them, and Charles the Simple negotiated with Rollo their leader. Hardly was the treaty concluded before they built the cathedrals of Bayeux, Caen, and Avranches. While Gaul had as yet no language, and was floundering between Latin, Teuton, and the Romanic, they had troubadours of their own. The ballads of Rou and de Benoit de Saint-Maur preceded by a hundred and twenty years the first Provençal poems. William the Bastard in 1066 had his poet Taillefer, who accompanied him everywhere and to whom he gave the Homeric mission of singing a conquest not yet undertaken. Then, hardly was England conquered (and it took them but one battle to do it) when the victors substituted themselves for the vanquished ; they broke the ancient Anglo-Saxon mould, and changed the language, the manners, the arts ; so that nothing was seen on the surface of the soil but them and their ways, the previous population disappearing as if annihilated.

While these deeds were being accomplished westward, something even more incredible was going on in the Orient. A handful — some forty Normans, losing their way on their return from Jerusalem, where they had gone to make a crusade on their own account, landed at Salerno and helped the Lombards to fight the Saracens. Sergius, Duke of Naples, to

reward them for this service, granted them a tract of land between Naples and Capua. There they instantly founded Aversa in 1029, which Ranulfo governed with the title of count. They had gained a footing in Italy — was it all they wanted? Wait and see — here comes Tancred d'Hauteville and his sons. In 1033 they land upon the shores of Naples. Two years later they are helping the Emperor of the East to reconquer Sicily from the Saracens (seizing Pouille for their share). They make themselves Dukes of Calabria; they float for a moment undecided between the two great parties that divide Italy, but finally decide to be Guelfs; and, sanctioned one day by the popes, they reward them the next by fighting for them against the Western emperors. And how much time did it take them to do all that? From 1035 to 1060, twenty-five years!

Room for Roger, the Great Count! It does not satisfy him to be Duke of Calabria; he steps across the straits, takes Messina in 1061, Palermo in 1072. In the space of eleven years he annihilates the Saracenic power. But it is not enough for him to be a conqueror like Alexander and a legislator like Justinian; he must needs unite in himself the sacerdotal power and the military power, the mitre and the sword; in 1098 he had himself appointed Pope's legate, and he died in 1101, bequeathing to his descendants that title which is still one of the most precious of the present King of Naples.

His son Roger succeeded him, but *his* ambition was not satisfied in being Count of Sicily and Calabria; he must be king. He had himself proclaimed King

of Sicily in 1130; in 1146, he seized Athens and Corinth, whence he brought back silk-worms and mulberries. In 1154 he died, leaving Sicily to his son William the Bad, the one we found in his tomb at Monreale in royal clothes. William II., the Good, his son, succeeded him and built the cathedral at Monreale, the cathedral of Palermo, and the royal palace. This is William the pacific, William the poet, William the artist. He profits by all the civilizations, Greek, Moorish, and Occidental; he takes from the Occidentals mystic thought, from the Arabians form, from the Greeks ornamentation; finds time to make a crusade, and comes back to die, at thirty-six years of age, near to that Dome of Monreale which he built.

In him became extinct the legitimate descendants of the Great Count. His successor was a bastard of Roger, Duke of Pouille, named Tancred. With Tancred died the last of the Norman kings. Henry VI., who married Constance, Roger's daughter, succeeded him, and the Suabian family was henceforth on the throne of Sicily.

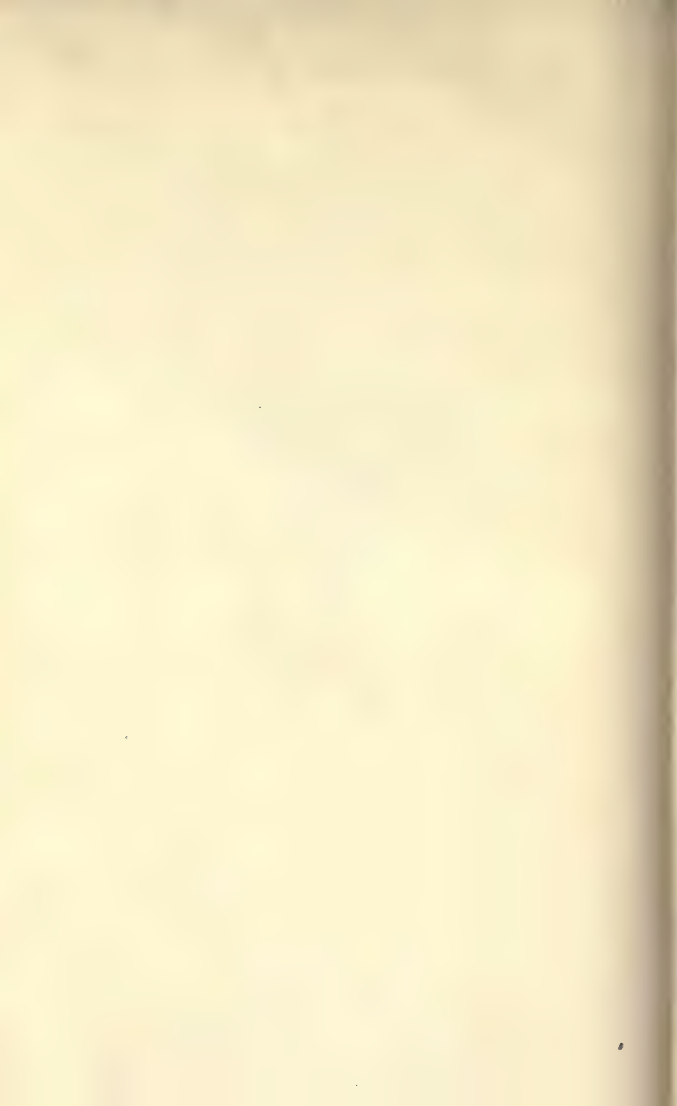
A few hours of our day remained to visit La Favorita, the royal country-house to which the predilection felt for it by King Ferdinand and Queen Caroline has given its name. During their long stay in Sicily La Favorita was the summer residence of the two exiles. It was from La Favorita that Lady Hamilton started to go and obtain from Nelson the rupture of the capitulation of Naples. Nelson, for a night of pleasure, broke his given word, and twenty thousand patriots paid with their heads for the cajoling of Emma Lyonna, formerly a London

prostitute. *La Favorita* is a caprice in the style of the Palagonian folly, except that *La Favorita* is wholly Chinese, internally and externally, furniture and gardens. There is no getting away from kiosks, pagodas, bridges, and tinkling bells. Needless to say that it is all in shocking taste, and in the very worst Louis XV. style.

On returning to Palermo we found the whole of our ship's company awaiting us at the door of the hotel. The *speronara* had come into port that very morning after an excellent voyage. She brought with her a fine provision of Marsala, bought at the vineyards. We had to let the good fellows, one and all, kiss our hands, and I gave them rendezvous on board for the following Monday.

THE END





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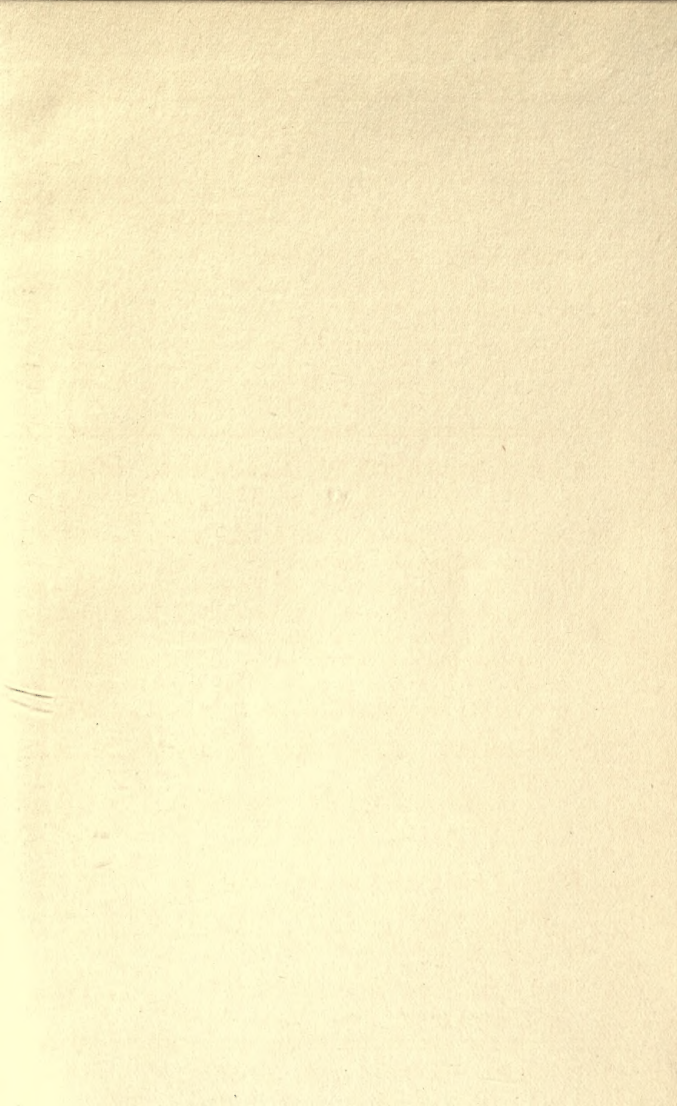
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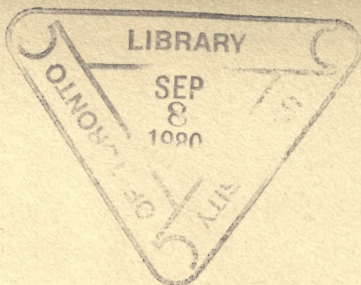
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